

THE REASONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE SIXTH COALITION
AGAINST NAPOLEON IN 1813

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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This study investigates the reasons for the success of the Sixth Coalition against Napoleon in 1813. Four critical principles emerge from U.S. joint doctrine that provide a means to examine coalition warfare: national goals, unity of effort, strategic plans, and adherence to plans. These principles illuminate the importance of coalition warfare in the defeat of Napoleon.

The failure of an earlier coalition, the Second Coalition in 1799, underscores the importance of the principles of coalition warfare to the success or failure of the coalitions against Napoleon and the French. This coalition failed because of its lack of attention to the details of coalition warfare. Its basic flaw, lack of a common coalition goal, undermined its unity and resulted in defeat.

The development of a common goal, the liberation of Germany, combined with the decline of the French and reforms by Napoleon's opponents led to a level playing field in 1813. The 1813 spring campaign resulted in a stalemate. The coalition used the subsequent armistice to further improve both politically and militarily. These improvements, particularly the adoption of a unified military strategy, resulted in improved unity of effort and provided the Sixth Coalition the margin for ultimate victory.

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ABSTRACT

THE REASONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE SIXTH COALITION AGAINST NAPOLEON IN 1813 by LCDR John Trost Kuehn, USN, 122 pages

This study investigates the reasons for the success of the Sixth Coalition against Napoleon in 1813. Four critical principles emerge from U.S. joint doctrine that provide a means to examine coalition warfare: national goals, unity of effort, strategic plans, and adherence to plans. These principles illuminate the primary importance of coalition warfare in the defeat of Napoleon.

The failure of an earlier coalition the Second Coalition in 1799 underscores the importance of the principles of coalition warfare to the success or failure of the coalitions against Napoleon and the French. This coalition failed because of its lack of attention to the details of coalition warfare. Its basic flaw, lack of a common coalition goal, undermined its unity and resulted in defeat.

The development of a common goal, the liberation of Germany, combined with the decline of the French and reforms by Napoleon's opponents led to a level playing field 1813. The 1813 spring campaign resulted in a stalemate. The coalition used the subsequent armistice to further improve their coalition both politically and militarily. These improvements, particularly the adoption of a unified military strategy, resulted in improved unity of effort and provided the coalition the margin for ultimate victory.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
APPROVAL PAGE.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THE FAILURE OF COALITION WARFARE IN 1798 - 1799.....	15
3. TERRIBLE LESSONS--THE COALITION FROM 1803 TO 1813	33
4. THE FORMATION OF THE SIXTH COALITION--SPRING 1813.....	56
5. THE ARMISTICE AND FALL CAMPAIGN--FORMULA FOR VICTORY.....	76
6. CONCLUSIONS	106
APPENDIX	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	118
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST.....	122

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars was a key era in the development of coalition warfare. The period produced seven anti-French coalitions, both unsuccessful and successful--mostly unsuccessful. As such, it provides both the student and military professional a veritable laboratory of coalition warfare from which to gain both historical and professional insights. Analysis of both the failed and victorious coalitions, therefore, offers a means to examine some basic principles that are essential to understanding the causes of success and defeat in coalition warfare.

The Sixth Coalition, formed in 1813, was the first coalition to conclusively defeat Napoleon. Why was the Sixth Coalition successful?¹ Most explanations center on two themes: the decline of France and Napoleon and the improvements of his opponents. A total explanation of the Sixth Coalition's victory encompasses both themes. The improvements Napoleon's opponents made together as a coalition team dominates the theme of improvement. Therefore, the composition, character, and history of these coalitions and their successful culmination as the Sixth Coalition illuminate some basic principles of coalition warfare.

Joint U.S. military doctrine provides a road map to study Napoleonic coalition warfare--particularly the evolution of its most successful coalition. Indeed, the natural result of the lessons nations learned from the Napoleonic period provided the basis for much current military doctrine. The writings of two of these coalitions' participants, Jomini and Clausewitz, have been quoted extensively in the U.S. Army's capstone operational doctrine manual FM 100-5. Examination of

Napoleonic coalition warfare may lead to the discovery of common principles and trends that lead to success in coalition warfare in general.

Examination of modern doctrinal considerations with respect to anti-Napoleonic coalitions yielded at least four principles--goals, unity of effort, strategic plans, and adherence to the plan. Doctrine explicitly states the first two--goals and unity of effort. The second two emerge from an examination of the successful resolution of the 1813 campaign in Germany by the Sixth Coalition. Modern doctrine implies unified coalition planning and coordination during execution, but goes no further than that. For the Sixth Coalition, with only one goal and one enemy, the second two principles were critical in providing the margin for success. However, a coalition risks failure and defeat if it ignores any of these principles.

An earlier coalition from the Napoleonic period provides a historical example of the danger inherent in a casual approach to coalition warfare. The Second Coalition, formed in 1798-1799, superficially resembled the later Sixth Coalition. Despite superior numbers, the isolation of Napoleon, and relatively good leadership in the field, the Second Coalition collapsed. However, the Second and Sixth Coalitions differed dramatically in the way they addressed the four principles discussed above. The Second Coalition virtually ignored these principles while the Sixth Coalition took much greater care in forming a multinational team.

Napoleon was to prove repeatedly that strength in numbers (sometimes to his own chagrin, as in Russia) did not guarantee success unless accompanied by strength of purpose. For a coalition, defining this purpose is the key. It was also difficult--as Napoleon's opponents discovered. Thus it takes more effort for a coalition to define common goals, agree to a common strategic plan, execute the plan, and maintain unity than it does for a single nation state or empire. Napoleon's opponents learned this lesson the hard way in the intervening years between their failure in 1799 and their success in 1813.

The nations of Europe not only learned the lessons of coalition warfare, but the period between the Second and Sixth Coalitions saw massive reforms and changes within the individual nations themselves. Were these lessons enough? Once the advantage that Napoleon had was counterbalanced by organizational, tactical, and even political improvements of his adversaries, the stage was set for a contest between the genius of one man and the collective strength of the coalition in 1813. Decisive success eluded the coalition in the spring of 1813. The leaders of the Sixth Coalition recognized the importance of their coalition itself and in the summer of 1813 exclusively devoted themselves to their goal of unity--in efforts, strategic plans, command, and execution. Despite some problems, their persistence and dedication led to success.

Finally, the lessons inherent in the successful culmination of an entire era of coalition warfare are particularly relevant to the modern era. This is because coalition warfare is the norm for recent and current military operations. Multinational operations, predominantly as a coalition, are now the almost exclusive vehicle for both conventional war and the more common operations involving military intervention short of conventional war. Modern architects of coalitions can learn much from the way their predecessors of the Napoleonic era solved, or failed to solve, the problems of coalition warfare.

Not since the wars of Louis XIV had Europe seen a similar unbroken string of coalitions to defeat the aggression of a single country. The various coalitions rose and fell apart with such regularity that the wars themselves were identified by the sequential number of the coalition that tried to prosecute them. A total of *seven* coalitions ultimately formed to combat the French and Napoleon between 1792 and 1815.

After twenty years of failure, a sixth allied coalition finally inflicted a comprehensive, and ultimately decisive, defeat on Napoleon in 1813. The consensus is that there were many elements to Napoleon's 1813 defeat. Most explanations have focused on Napoleon and his army,

but essential to a complete understanding of Napoleon's defeat is to look at this event from the point of view of the Sixth Coalition. What were the elements that led to the Allied success? Was the coalition formed in 1813 the bedrock that allowed other preconditions to combine and yield success for the Allies?

The lessons of Napoleonic coalition warfare illuminate key areas of current U.S. military doctrine. This doctrine states that U.S. military operations are *often* conducted within the framework of a multinational coalition.² U.S. military leaders predict that operations beyond the shores of the United States will almost *always* be multinational in nature.³ The lessons offered by Napoleonic Coalitions are, therefore, both timely and relevant. Dr. Gordon A. Craig has perhaps stated it best:

All of the thorny problems with which western statesmen have wrestled during the Second World War, the Korean conflict, and the troubled history of NATO can be found, in hardly altered form, within the anti-Napoleonic coalition, a fact that suggests that certain problems are endemic to military alliances, which may or may not be comforting.⁴

Joint doctrine offers a methodology to analyze success and failure in anti-Napoleonic coalitions. This doctrine defines a coalition as "an ad hoc arrangement between two or more nations, for common action."⁵ On the other hand an alliance is "a result of formal agreements between two or more nations for broad, long-term objectives."⁶ The early coalitions against Napoleon were uniformly ad hoc. Current doctrine lists six "considerations" for multinational operations: national goals, unity of effort, doctrine, training and equipment, cultural differences, management of resources, and national communications.⁷ Of these, goals and unity of effort were the most important to the success of the anti-Napoleonic coalition.

Four critical principles emerge from analysis of the Sixth Coalition's goals and unity of effort. The first is that the coalition must identify a common goal or group of goals. Next, the goal(s) must be addressed by a strategic plan. All the participants must support the strategy and

generally adhere to its execution via military war plans. Finally, unity of effort must pervade the development of goals, strategies, and war plans.

These principles provide the means to examine the evolution of the various coalitions, including the successful Sixth Coalition in 1813. As mentioned previously, the Second Coalition (minus, significantly, Prussia), bore the most resemblance to the later victorious Sixth Coalition. The principal similarity was that the coalition *attempted* to implement a unified strategy. Also, the military situations in 1799 and 1813 had many common features. The Revolutionary cause in 1799 was as desperate in this earlier war as Napoleon's situation at the beginning of 1813. By 1799 six continuous years of war and civil strife had exhausted the French. They were also overextended, meeting commitments on multiple fronts, just as they would be in 1813. There were even nationalistic overtones by the Italians that foreshadowed that of the Germans in 1813.

The example of the War of the Second Coalition serves to illustrate the principles of Napoleonic coalition warfare that were critical to the success or failure of the Allies. As discussed earlier, these principles consisted of the coalition and national goals, strategic plans, adherence to the plan, and unity of effort. Great Britain took great pains to try to apply the lessons of coalition warfare in assembling the Second Coalition. Her vision was not a coalition, but a grand alliance of the four great powers: herself, Russia, Austria, and Prussia. In the end she was frustrated and settled for the less manageable vehicle of a coalition.

However, the parochialism of the individual member nations negated the advantages afforded the Second Coalition by circumstance. The War of the Second Coalition dramatically illustrates the importance of the critical coalition principles. The failure of the Second Coalition to reconcile its divergent national goals hindered it from properly addressing the other three principles.

The coalitions after 1799 attempted, too, to unify their efforts. They were also to founder on the rocks, due principally to a lack of unity at the outset. Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Great Britain were to learn that a far greater effort, requiring fundamental reforms and tactical improvements, would be required to meet the challenge of a France led by Napoleon.

Before examining in-depth the improvements of the Allies, an examination of the other significant aspect of Napoleon's defeat in 1813 is also necessary. Important as a catalyst in the formation of the 1813 coalition, and often the explanation for Napoleon's ultimate defeat, is the theme of imperial decline. The explanations for this decline focus on Napoleon, the Grand Armee and its leaders, and the consequences of the Russian fiasco of 1812.

One widely accepted viewpoint for Napoleon's defeats in his later years, particularly after Tilsit, was that he was "past his prime."⁸ Napoleon acknowledged as much when he confided to his valet, Constant, at Austerlitz, "A man has but one time for war; I shall be good for six years yet, but after that I shall have to stop."⁹ This would put Napoleon well past his prime for everything beyond 1810 by his own assessment. Yet Napoleon would essentially win the first half of the 1813 campaign with his most inexperienced army against a triumphant opponent in an increasingly hostile Germany.

Napoleon's political skills had been in decline for an even longer time. Two examples are his costly miscalculation in Spain and his self-destructive economic warfare with Great Britain. Napoleon, the politician, usually set goals for Napoleon, the general, which were, in the end, unattainable.¹⁰ The armistice in the summer of 1813 was a noteworthy exception to this trend. In the summer of 1813 Napoleon gave himself the diplomatic opportunity to cut his losses. Instead of coming to a political or diplomatic solution, he equivocated until he was forced back into the field to seek a military resolution to his problem.

As the commander in chief, Napoleon must also bear the responsibility for his military in 1813. This was composed of two groups, his upper level command structure and the composition of the Grand Armee of 1813. Napoleon has received much criticism that he never really trained his subordinates in his style of warfare.¹¹ However, his correspondence to his Marshals in Spain and Eugene in Italy contradicts this assessment.¹² Teaching and learning are two different things. A better explanation can be found in the Marshalate's collective loss of enthusiasm after twenty years of near-continuous combat.¹³ Attrition alone had killed some of Napoleon's best, Lannes and Bessieres, and Massena had retired after his defeat by Wellington in Spain. However, Napoleon can be justly criticized for his failure to take full advantage of the talent remaining to him in 1813, particularly Davout and St. Cyr.

A far more difficult problem for Napoleon was his span of control. If Napoleon had truly learned the lessons of Spain and Russia then he may have been more careful in his assignment of tasks to subordinates. Riehn's final assessment on this matter in his book on Napoleon's 1812 campaign is more explicit. The tasks Napoleon had set for himself, both logistically and for command and control, were technologically unattainable.¹⁴ Napoleon's ability to control the operations of the various armies not under his personal command was a vulnerability that the Allies took deliberate advantage of in their 1813 strategy and war plan.

The 1812 campaign is critical to understanding Napoleon's situation in 1813, particularly that of his army. The huge army that Napoleon employed in 1813 was vastly undertrained due to the loss of men in Russia. The veterans returning from Russia were desperately needed as officers and noncommissioned officers. Inexperienced men filled positions of higher authority because of the shortages produced by the Russian debacle. Enlisted troops became junior officers, junior officers were promoted to field grade rank, and general officers with divisional and corps experience assumed command of corps and armies, respectively. The new conscripts themselves

were less hardy than those of previous years, principally due to their age. "I need men not children," was Napoleon's assessment.¹⁵

The Russian campaign's long term effects were on the French cavalry, and to a lesser degree the artillery, due to the incredible wastage of horses. Without effective cavalry for reconnaissance, screening, and pursuit after victory, Napoleon's famous maxim of never letting the victor or vanquished rest was not realized.¹⁶ The effect on the artillery was to limit its mobility on and off the battlefield, and therefore resulted in a diminution of a basic tactical advantage inherent to the French Army, its superior artillery. Finally, Napoleon's Russian losses also ensured that he would have to continue to rely heavily on his German allies for support in his war to retain Germany. That they fought as well as they did against their own kind provides additional evidence of Napoleon's ability to inspire his German troops against what might have been their own best interests in 1813.

The decline of the French and Napoleon accompanied the opposite development in the camp of his opponents. Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Great Britain improved separately and as a coalition team. Ironically, these improvements were a direct result of Napoleon's victories and the spread of nationalism by the Republican, and then Imperial, armies of France. In Italy and Poland nationalism worked to Napoleon's advantage. However, in Prussia, Austria, Russia, and Spain it proved a major element in his undoing. The improvements unleashed by these forces resulted in major tactical, organizational, and political reforms to varying degrees in all of Napoleon's continental opponents and forced warfare to a new level of competence.

Nevertheless, the combination of the improvements of the Allies with the decline of the French remained insufficient to defeat Napoleon in the first half of 1813. He won two major battles, recaptured the initiative and most of Germany during a period that followed one of the greatest military disasters ever to befall a general and his army.

As the nations of Europe incorporated the military lessons of the new ways of war, they perhaps lost sight of the importance of the coalition aspect of their struggle. All fundamentally realized that they must operate within the context of a coalition, but went to war in 1813 with incomplete preparation and planning. They came to the fight in 1813 either flushed with victory, like the Russians, or with enthusiastic patriotism, like the Prussians. The destruction of Napoleon's 1812 Grand Armee and British victories in Spain supported this attitude. But cooperation in the spring of 1813 was to rely on passion, not objective deliberation. Only one nation, Austria, proceeded calmly and deliberately with an eye toward a truly unified and potent coalition.

Fortunately, the progress and performance of the Sixth Coalition in the spring of 1813 unnerved Napoleon enough to cause him to agree to an armistice. While the diplomats (which included Napoleon) negotiated, the separate camps prepared for a renewal of the war. Napoleon met his match in Metternich, who isolated the French diplomatically, and hostilities resumed in August 1813. Three months after the end of the armistice the military situation had been completely reversed. The Allies decisively defeated Napoleon and he retreated precipitately back to France. What changed from the first half of 1813 to the second? Monumental changes, in fact, had occurred within the character the Sixth Coalition during the summer of 1813. Of the improvements the Allies had undergone in the years preceding 1813, those in the realm of coalition warfare remained largely unrealized. The armistice in the summer of 1813 provided the time and opportunity for the Allies to improve the coalition itself.

The key problem for the Allied coalitions up to this point was the divergence between their national objectives and goals. More than one coalition had foundered due to conflicting national goals. The challenge to all the coalitions was how to reconcile individual national interests and still achieve the long-term goal of a favorable balance of power in the peace after the

war. Lord Castlereagh and Prince Metternich understood this--their solution was the Congress of Vienna. Both recognized that the first essential phase in achieving the long-term goal was a leveling of the playing field. A balance of power could never be achieved with Napoleon dominant in Europe. The first step of the first phase had to be a common goal that would result in Napoleon's defeat--the ouster of France from Germany.

The liberation of Germany was precisely Prussia's national goal. To Prussia liberation meant the ejection of the French and the dissolution of the Confederation of the Rhine. Austria, still neutral prior to the Armistice of 1813 (although technically an ally of France), had generally shared this goal.¹⁷ However, Austria's efforts were not geared toward the sort of humbling defeat that the British, Prussians, and the Tsar were after. Not yet. It was in Austria's best interest to bolster Prussia as a bulwark against Russia, but it was also in her interest to maintain France as a foil to Prussia. This framework was generally Austria's policy throughout the entire span of these coalitions.

Great Britain brought to the fight the overarching goal she supported all along: maintenance of a continental balance of power favorable to British economic interests. Russia's goal, too, was to restore a balance of power in Europe favorable to her interests. Since many of Tsar Alexander's principal advisors were German it was no accident that Alexander saw the liberation of Germany as a convenient vehicle to this end.¹⁸

Napoleon's reluctance to accept all of the terms of the Allies in August of 1813 had the immediate effect, however, of adding the considerable military power of Austria to the coalition. For the first time since the collapse of the First Coalition Austria, Great Britain, Prussia, and Russia were all members of the coalition simultaneously. Austria's participation meant that additional theaters of war would be opened against Napoleon in southern Germany and Italy. Napoleon's equivocation also had the effect of refocusing the Sixth Coalition on Napoleon

himself. It was at this point that their goal probably began to evolve into the view of that Napoleon would have to go.

German liberation required a corresponding military strategy. Initially this strategy revolved around the capture of as much territory as possible while Napoleon attempted to recover from the 1812 debacle. After the spring defeats it was clear that something more than a preponderance of force and patriotic fervor would be needed. The result was a meeting at the castle of Trachenberg between the Tsar, the King of Prussia, and the Crown Prince of Sweden. It was in this setting that a coherent campaign plan against Napoleon was finalized. This strategic plan, its formulation, and the adherence of the coalition partners to it were without precedent. The Allies finally deduced that they needed to synchronize their efforts or continue to fail.

The Trachenberg plan essentially avoided combat with Napoleon and concentrated on the flank forces commanded by his marshals. This modus operandi differed from the coalition strategies that preceded it. The plan might have been a result of the experience in Russia, where the vulnerable flanks of Napoleon's Grande Armee under his subordinates finally gave way. Count Josef Radetzky has been recognized as one of the brainchildren of this plan.¹⁹ Radetzky was cognizant of Schwarzenberg's experience as Napoleon's southern flank commander in Russia. Additionally, the decisive impact of Napoleon in the 1813 spring campaign, especially at Lutzen, probably cemented that aspect of the plan that directed avoidance of combat with forces under Napoleon's personal command.

Another key part of the plan was the role of French personalities that were now in the Allied camp. It was at Trachenberg that Moreau and Jomini were identified as the principal military advisors to the entourage of sovereigns that would accompany the main field army of Bohemia.²⁰ Bernadotte, as Crown Prince of Sweden, strongly influenced these appointments as well as securing command of one of the major field armies for himself. The actions and advice of

all three reinforced the plan to avoid combat with forces led by Napoleon in person. Execution and adherence to the plan were essential to its ultimate success.

In retrospect, this plan accorded Napoleon and the French methods of war an incredible amount of respect. To understand how the leaders of the Sixth Coalition came to this point, it is necessary to examine in detail those coalitions that preceded and evolved into it. The Sixth Coalition was the product and beneficiary of these earlier attempts at victory.

In summary, the Sixth Coalition was successful for a variety of reasons. Its individual members had improved, its opponent and his army had declined, and the coalition itself was a much improved version of earlier coalitions. The first two reasons for success led to an apparent stalemate in the spring of 1813. Napoleon had declined, but not enough to lose decisively. The individual militaries of the coalition had improved, but not enough to provide the margin for a decisive campaign that liberated all of Germany east of the Rhine. Would the coalition break apart, as in 1799, or would it prevail?

The Sixth Coalition established a basis for success by the summer of 1813 that the earlier coalitions had strived for, but failed to achieve. A universal goal, the liberation of Germany, was the foundation upon which *other* coalition principles--unity, strategy, and adherence to plans--improved. The improvements provided the time during the armistice of the summer of 1813 to attempt to achieve the coalition goal via two options: through peaceful negotiation or via renewed coalition warfare after a period of recovery, reorganization, and rearmament.

The reorganization during the armistice included a planning meeting at the castle of Trachenburg. Among other things, this meeting developed and published an extraordinary strategic plan that was unique in an era of extraordinary military developments. This document was essentially the first of the modern operations orders--a coalition operations order. It unified

effort, command, and strategy; not in the brain of one man, or even a supreme war council, but through a document.

Meanwhile the politicians and diplomats, personified by Prince Metternich of Austria, complemented the efforts of the generals by further defining, via treaties and conventions, the Sixth Coalition itself. Key to this effort was the reconciliation of national interests--including the willingness of nations to compromise. National leaders, diplomats, and generals worked more closely with each other than they ever had before. Perhaps successful coalition warfare demands a far greater degree of cooperation between the military and political branches of national power.

When hostilities finally resumed in August of 1813 problems, as always, arose within the coalition. However, the integrity of the coalition weathered these difficulties, principally because of the military unity resulting from the Trachenberg Plan and the political unity resulting from the common goals codified by Metternich and others in the various treaties.

¹This convention for the war begun in 1813 is Weigley's. Russell F. Weigley, *The Age of Battles* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 454. David Chandler, in the index to his *Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1966) references both the 1812 and 1813 campaigns as part of the Sixth Coalition. The Sixth Coalition's campaign in 1813 is also known as the War of German Liberation. Reference to the Sixth Coalition is reference to the coalition that fought the War of German Liberation.

²U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Officer, 1995), VI-1.

³General R. W. Riscassi, USA, "Principles for Coalition Warfare," *Joint Force Quarterly* 1 (Summer 1993): 58.

⁴Gordon A. Craig, *Problems of Coalition Warfare: The Military Alliance Against Napoleon, 1813-1814*, The Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History Number Seven (Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, 1965), 2.

⁵Joint Pub 3-0, VI-1.

⁶Ibid., VI-1.

⁷Ibid., VI-2.

⁸Chandler, 733.

⁹Baron W. Constant, *Memoires of Constant*, Vol. III, trans. Elizabeth G. Martin, (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1895), 261.

¹⁰Chandler, 660.

¹¹Chandler 756, 860, 939.

¹² Robert M. Epstein, *Prince Eugene at War: 1809* (Arlington, TX: Empire Games Press, 1984) *passim*; Charles Oman, *A History of the Peninsula War*. 7 vols. (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1902-1930), *passim*.

¹³Chandler, 939.

¹⁴The scale on which Napoleon conducted war “could succeed only with the use of railroads and the telegraph.” Richard K. Riehn, *1812: Napoleon’s Russian Campaign* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991), 407.

¹⁵Scott Bowden, *Napoleon’s Grande Armee of 1813* (Chicago: The Emperor’s Press, 1990), 204.

¹⁶Napoleon Bonaparte, *The Evolution of Modern Warfare*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), 273.

¹⁷Leo Gershoy, *The French Revolution and Napoleon* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1933), 508.

¹⁸Gershoy, 503.

¹⁹Craig, 5.

²⁰Baron von Mueffling, *Memoirs of the Campaign of 1813 and 1814*, ed. and trans. P. H. Yorke (London: Richard Bentley, 1853), 56.

CHAPTER 2

THE FAILURE OF COALITION WARFARE IN 1798-1799

The Second Coalition of European nations formed in 1798 and 1799 almost defeated revolutionary France. Despite military success in all theaters, the coalition was defeated the moment its triumph seemed assured--and collapsed. Two points of view prevail about why this coalition failed. The first point of view was that the individual nations placed their own self-interest above the common, multinational interests of the Second Coalition. The second point of view, articulated by Paul Schroeder, was that the Second Coalition collapsed because Austria subordinated her national interests in favor of keeping the coalition together.¹ The common thread for both points of view was that the coalition members had problems reconciling coalition goals with national goals. The members of the Second Coalition did not reconcile or accept the conditions under which they were operating, either in a general war with individual nation goals or in concert with one or more common goals. Stated another way, the Second Coalition failed because the coalition itself was flawed.

The principles for coalitions discussed in chapter 1 provide a framework for an examination of the Second Coalition's flawed nature: national and coalition goals, strategic plan, adherence to the plan, and unity of effort. The Second Coalition failed in all of these areas because they failed in the first: the reconciliation of their goals. Failure to reconcile goals led to *disunity of effort* from the outset that translated into separate national efforts in determining strategy and focus. As different strategies came into conflict with each other they caused groups of nations within the Coalition to develop their own agenda and war plans. Failure to execute

operations as planned compounded this situation and can often be traced to nations providing new instructions based on national, not coalition, interests.

This was precisely the situation when a major coalition army was defeated in Switzerland. The Second Coalition had held together as long as victory was the diet. The true test of a coalition's unity is perseverance in the face of defeat. Remember, too, that the French victories threatened none of the coalition nations' territory or capitals--as they would in subsequent coalitions. A more unified coalition might have held together in the face of these setbacks. Unity must begin with goals--these the Second Coalition never reconciled.

The Second Coalition has been much criticized--yet, as we will see, it came very close to success. Of all the anti-French coalitions formed before 1813, it superficially resembled the successful Sixth Coalition that emerged some fourteen years later. Both coalitions shared the characteristic of success early on. Also, the coalition armies both outnumbered the thinly stretched French forces at the beginning of the campaign. As in 1813 a significant reason for the lack of veteran cadres for a continental contest would be Napoleon himself, cut off in Egypt with the cream of the French army. General war weariness and disillusionment with the French "liberators" in the European countries they now "defended" was also a common trait for both 1799 and 1813. Similarly, an outright rebellion in Naples foreshadowed the partisans of Spain, Russia in 1812, and Germany in 1809 and 1813.

On the surface the Second Coalition resembled the later Sixth Coalition in 1813. Beneath the overt similarity of the earlier coalition lay fundamental flaws. The dichotomy between national and coalition goals caused disunity and dispersion of effort. A series of crises occurred that demanded a dedication to harmony that the leaders of the coalition never had, and had never gone to any great lengths to develop. Defeat only brought mutual suspicion and animosity to the fore and the Second Coalition collapsed in mutual recrimination as a result.

To better understand the genesis of the Second Coalition and, perhaps more important, the origins of its anti-French strategy, it is necessary to review the history of its predecessor--the First Coalition. The First Coalition set the stage for the Second. It was an Eighteenth Century response to the catharsis that defined nineteenth century Europe--the French Revolution. The apparent shared goal of its protagonists--the overthrow of the revolutionary French government-- was never really shared by all the participants simultaneously. Implicit in this goal was the restoration of the territorial status quo and a Bourbon monarchy. The individual nations opposed to France: Spain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain, were far more interested in the restoration, or enhancement, of their territorial integrity than in the House of Bourbon. There was no overall unity of command or synchronization of the disparate military efforts that were going on in the various theaters from the Pyrenees to Flanders. As a result each nation pursued its goals essentially without regard to the others. Despite some local victories, the First Coalition slowly fell apart as the huge French armies generated by the levee en masse defeated each nation in detail. Finally, only the most implacable opponents, Great Britain and Austria, remained.

Great Britain continued to fight because of French domination of the low countries and the resultant closure of their ports to British trade. The specter of a unified Franco-Dutch fleet posed an even greater nightmare for the politicians in London than the economic predicament. Great Britain redoubled her financial support of Austria--the only major continental power still in the fight. France, too, was tiring of the fight. However, revolutionary politics would not allow peace. At this point Napoleon Bonaparte entered the picture and forced Austria to agree to a truce in the spring of 1797 at Leoben.

This truce followed a common destructive pattern for treaties during the entire Napoleonic era: it included both open and "secret" provisions. These secret provisions allowed the French and Austrians to get around other obligations that they had incurred in previous treaties, making a

mockery of the entire process. In October of that same year the French government concluded a comprehensive peace treaty with Austria at Campo Formio. The Rhine was recognized as a “natural boundary” of France in another secret clause, yet the details of this boundary remained unresolved. The unresolved issues along the Rhine and Austria's foothold in Italy guaranteed a conflict in the future. The revolutionary leader Sieyes summed it up best, “This treaty is not peace: it is a call to new war.”²

Great Britain regarded these treaties as outright betrayal. To make matters worse, Austria defaulted on her loan convention with Great Britain. This one issue was to completely poison the atmosphere between the two countries that needed to cooperate the most in their war against France. Austria was under no illusions about a future conflict with France. As a result, the two most inveterate foes of revolutionary France would barely even communicate with each other while their respective leaders negotiated for the creation of a new coalition.

The dispute came to a head in May 1797 when the Austrian Foreign Minister Baron Thugut refused to ratify a convention for the repayment of her war loans from Great Britain. The loan convention was of monumental importance because its ratification was always the entering argument for further British subsidies to Austria.

Why would the Austrians commit such a treacherous act? The answer reveals much about Austria's national goals and perception of herself as a continental power. Thugut's defense was that he had authorized the Austrian ambassador to Britain, Prince Stahremburg, to sign a different agreement.³ His concern was that Austria's credit would be ruined once the loan convention was made public. Thugut, in the midst of final peace negotiations with France (Campo Formio had not yet been signed), was already looking downstream at his ability to finance another war against the French.

The other side of the coin was Austria's desire to retain the power of independent action, another hallmark of a great power. Signing the loan convention would have reduced her to total financial dependence on Great Britain. Additionally, as the one European power that had provided the most manpower and sacrificed the most blood, she did not feel obligated to pay off the loans.

Thus when Austria approached Britain in April 1798 with an alliance proposal, it foundered on the rocks of the unratified loan convention. Britain would coordinate, rather than cooperate, with Austria in the war against the French. No alliance would be made and money would not change hands.

Against this backdrop the French continued their territorial aggrandizement under the guise of peace that they had previously gained by military conquest. French aggression not only provoked an outraged Europe into forming a second coalition, but had the additional effect of further weakening France by overextending her militarily.

The first act of military over extension was Napoleon's expedition against Egypt. His purpose was to strike at the British lines of communication with India. One very significant action incidental to this expedition was Napoleon's seizure of Malta from the Knights of St. John. Unfortunately for the French, Russian Tsar Paul I was the self-proclaimed protector of this order and aspired to the position of Grand Master. The Tsar had already been in serious negotiation, as will be seen, to field an army against the French. Malta's conquest was the act that pushed the Tsar over the edge into open hostility to the French. The other key aspect of the French aggression in the east was Turkey's addition to the ranks of France's foes. Russia and the Porte now found themselves on the same side for the first time in history. The military effect of this rapprochement was significant to the coalition that was now taking shape. On September 5, 1798 the Turks allowed a Russian fleet "for one time only" to pass through the Bosphorus.⁴

Napoleon was not alone in his ability to add enemies to the field against the French. Before Napoleon departed for Egypt he was already cognizant of the Directory's plans for aggression against the Papal States, the United Provinces, and the Swiss federation. Macksey articulates this policy best (in a twist on Clausewitz) as the "Napoleonic practice of using peace as an extension of war."⁵ However, while the master was absent in Egypt, other French practitioners of this art added new realms to the French sphere of influence. These actions guaranteed that France would soon be at war again with Austria as well as Russia.

Two further events now occurred in Italy as prelude to the coming war. Each, in its own way was to affect the Second Coalition's conduct of operations. First was the Kingdom of Naples, a Bourbon Monarchy. Emboldened by Nelson, the Neapolitan army moved to "liberate" Rome in December 1798. The French dispersed the Neapolitan forces and then proceeded south and displaced the Bourbon King, conquering his country and establishing the satellite Parthenopian Republic. The French also convinced the King of Piedmont, Austria's erstwhile ally, to abdicate to Sardinia. Upon his departure the Piedmontese Army, with his consent, was incorporated into the French forces in Italy.⁶ The issue of Piedmont was to cause serious problems for the Second Coalition within the year.

In summary, the French were militarily overextended. They had to maintain virtual armies of occupation in Holland, Italy, and Switzerland. The situation in Naples was particularly onerous. The French occupation had resulted in a wave of patriotism and resistance by the Lazzaroni (beggars) in the cities and the Sandfesiti (peasants) in the countryside.⁷ General Macdonald, the commander in this sector, commented that "no sooner was insurrection crushed at one point than it broke out in another."⁸ British sea power, too, had to be honored with garrison troops along a lengthy, vulnerable coastline that now included Belgium and Italy. Additionally,

the threat of a renewed Austro-Russian onslaught in Italy or along the Rhine (including Switzerland) caused the French to maintain substantial armies in response.

The Directory prepared to face the armies of the Second Coalition under these considerable constraints. Instead of contracting or withdrawing their forces, the French government adhered to the “principle of keeping everything, and not yielding a foot of ground,” as Macdonald bitterly observed with respect to his particular situation.⁹

While France steadily gobbled up as much territory as she could during the peace following Campo Formio, the diplomats and mails of the major European powers shuttled back and forth in order to create an alliance. The final product was not an alliance as defined in chapter 1, but a coalition whose common theme was war against France. Beyond this, all common cause in war aims of the protagonists ended. Great Britain and Russia were proponents of a strategy of advocating the overthrow of the revolutionary government and its replacement by a stable government, preferably a monarchy. Austria’s war aims were far more limited. They were essentially the security of the Hapsburg dominions and the restoration of her dominant influence in Germany and Italy.

An examination of the individual nation goals and objectives provides a means to understand the Second Coalition’s character. Strategies and their attendant war plans flowed from these goals. The critical principle of unity of effort was already compromised because Great Britain and Austria were on bad terms due to the loan convention. Also important, because it would affect the evolution of a follow-on strategy after the reconquest of Italy, would be the doctrinal differences between the Austrian and Russian methods of war. But the basic fissures in the coalition at the outset were the dispute between Austria and Great Britain and divergent national goals.

It is best to start with Great Britain because she was the architect of all the various coalitions. The current leader of the British crusade was the Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville. His great general object was “to reduce France within her ancient limits.”¹⁰ From the British national standpoint, this meant the liberation of Belgium and the United Provinces. As the maritime threats receded, this continental goal always resumed its importance to Great Britain. She could not accomplish it without the help of one or more of the continental land powers: Prussia, Austria, or Russia.

Great Britain’s methodology in forming a new coalition revolved around money. As discussed already, the fatal flaw in the coalition at the outset was that there would be no concert between Austria and Great Britain. Different objectives resulted in different strategies to attain them. A natural result was that command of the coalition armies would be split between at least two camps within the coalition, one British-sponsored and one Austrian. At this point Britain narrowed her efforts and focused on funding either Prussia, Russia, or both to further her ends. Prussia was Britain’s historical ally on the continent and Britain turned to her first.

Both France and the Allies courted Prussia as an ally. Prussia’s attitude was historically pro-British and anti-Austrian. She was in competition with Austria for influence in Germany. Her strategy to this end was to remain on the defensive, hopefully as a neutral, and gain in influence in Germany at Austria’s expense without the commitment of military forces outside her borders. Talleyrand states this mutual enmity best, “We have given up fearing coalitions: there is a principle of hatred, jealousy and distrust between the Cabinets of Berlin and Vienna which will guide them above all else.”¹¹ The historic hostility between Prussian and Austria, Great Britain’s potential partners, compounded the enmity that now existed between Great Britain and Austria. Thus the Prussian relationship to Austria served to further poison the atmosphere in which the Second Coalition formed.

Nevertheless Britain and Russia courted Prussia right up to the beginning of the War in March 1799 when the fruitless negotiations were finally overcome by events. Prussia would remain neutral, but the Anglo-Russian camp would vainly continue to court her as the war continued.

The position of Russia was critical to the coalition because of the complications between Austria, Prussia, Great Britain. Russia was the link between the Austrian and British camps. The Tsar dealt with Great Britain on the one hand and Austria on the other. His goals were closely aligned with the British. The Tsar violently opposed the ideas of the Revolution and exceeded possibly even Britain in his desire to restore the Bourbons. Paul also aspired to the role of arbiter of the final peace after the successful conclusion of the war.

Polish partitions and Turkish issues had preoccupied the Russians up to this point. The conquest of Malta, beyond the other French aggressions previously listed, made Russia's participation not a question of if, but when, where, and with whom. Her problem, as it has been ever since the emergence of Russia as a great power, was geography. Russia shared no border with the common enemy, the "empire" of the French revolution. She could advance through northern Germany, which required Prussia's cooperation. Alternatively, she could advance through southern Germany, which required a partnership with Austria. Finally, she could go by sea, which required British cooperation and assistance. It was for these reasons that Britain worked with Russia, initially to align with Prussia and use the northern route to "liberate" the Netherlands. At this point, with Great Britain on the verge of signing a treaty with Russia, Austria approached Russia. Together they established the groundwork for a bilateral Austro-Russian alliance that eventually caused the Russian main effort to transit via the Hapsburg dominions.

When a treaty was finally signed between Great Britain and Russia (St. Petersburg, December 1798), it included nothing about Austria. The original subsidies had been dedicated to

pay for Russian troops under the Prussian sphere of influence. With Prussia neutral, the two countries decided to cooperate on a joint invasion of Holland. This was the genesis of the strategy to liberate the Dutch. Some British money financed the Russians that fought in Italy and Switzerland with the Austrians--but this expenditure was not part of the treaty.

Finally Austria. Her broad national goals--security of the Hapsburg dominions and the restoration of her dominant influence in Germany and Italy--translated into a form of containment strategy. The French would be held along the Rhine, Italy reconquered, all the while preserving the Austrian army from too much damage. She was secondarily interested in Switzerland and the Netherlands. Switzerland because the French controlled it and thus threatened the flanks of the Italian and German theaters. The Netherlands, because Prussian involvement in the liberation of the low countries might further reduce Austria's influence in Germany. The overthrow of the French government and restoration of the monarchy were not essential to Austria's national interests.

If Austria and Russia's objectives were different, why did Russia provide so many troops to the Austrian effort? This question brings us to the next logical step for the coalition--the military strategy chosen to accomplish the goals of the participants. Two strategies evolved as a natural outgrowth of the bipolar character of this coalition--one that reflected Austria's views and one that reflected Great Britain's.

The British and Russians felt that the best way to topple the French Government was to invade France. Their plan involved invading France from Switzerland and raising the Bourbon standard in the city of Lyons. To do this they would help the Austrians defeat the French armies in Italy and Switzerland to provide a secure base for the invasion. This plan encompassed the achievement of Austria's goals. It meant the ejection of the French from Italy and protected the flank of the Austrian forces in Southern Germany commanded by the Archduke Charles. For the

Anglo-Russian subcomponent of the coalition these plans had another benefit. They would, it was hoped, further distract and dilute the already outnumbered French forces and enable the success of a second Anglo-Russian effort that would land and liberate the Batavian (Dutch) Republic.

On the surface the plans were complementary and militarily sound. But the main effort to achieve the Anglo-Russian objective was completely different from Austria's. The invasion of France would occur after one of Austria's main military objectives, the reconquest of Italy, had been accomplished and possibly before a front in Holland was opened. What was to keep Austria from ceasing offensive operations and consolidating her gains in Italy and Germany or, worse yet, concluding a separate peace with France? Why should she cooperate at all with Great Britain who had refused to sign any treaty with her or further subsidize her efforts? Could a Russian force accomplish the critical invasion of France without Austrian military or logistical support? These pressing questions haunted Grenville, Prime Minister Pitt, and the Tsar as the military events unfolded almost exactly according to plan.

The Austrian plan, as previously discussed revolved around securing their interests in Italy and southern Germany. To accomplish this they deployed three armies generally grouped in southern Germany, the Tyrol (opposite Switzerland), and from their foothold in Italy. Archduke Charles commanded in Germany, and a Swiss officer in Austrian employ, General Hotze, commanded in the Tyrol. The initial choice for Italy was the Archduke Joseph. Meanwhile the Austrians had asked the Tsar to bring their great military leader, Marshal Suvorov, out of exile to lead the Russian forces in Italy.

Alexander Suvorov, the hero of the Polish and Turkish wars, was a brilliant but eccentric general. His penchant for stirring up political trouble during his campaigns, made him distasteful to the new Tsar. However, for the sake of the coalition, the Tsar reluctantly sent him. The often tactless Suvorov soon caused the Austrians to regret his appointment, too.

Meanwhile, Baron Thugut, as the head of the Hofkriegsrat or Aulic Council, decided not to appoint Archduke Joseph, due to his inexperience, as the Italian front commander. Suvorov, by virtue of his reputation and experience, now received the job of commanding all the coalition forces in Italy. By a strange chain of events the Second Coalition now had its most powerful army under the command of its most talented General. Two other facts offset this good fortune. Suvorov, eager to fight Napoleon (he never would) and overthrow the French, was now leading the main effort of the one country ambivalent to that goal. Additionally, Suvorov was not the man to lead a coalition team, if ever there existed a politically inept general it was Suvorov.

In addition to the Austrian commitment, the Anglo-Russian treaty committed another 45,000 Russians to the coalition. The decision to employ these troops, under the command of Count Rimski-Korsakov, was wholly Great Britain's. After all, Grenville's treaty had paid for them and the Russians were to have originally operated under the Prussian sphere. At this point Prussia's duplicity revealed itself. She requested subsidies from Grenville's brother Thomas, who was on a special mission to try to get them to join the coalition at the eleventh hour--to remain neutral! This act forced Grenville to acknowledge that Korsakov's Russians would have to operate in concert with the Austrians--but where? At this point the military operations already underway influenced the decision that positioned Korsakov's army.

In southern Germany, early in the spring, Archduke Charles defeated the French under Jourdan. With Jourdan in retreat, Charles then turned to his left and forced Massena's French forces out of Zurich. Suvorov, meanwhile, forced the Adda River in northern Italy, beating a French army under General Scherer. General Macdonald, in danger of being cut off in southern Italy, rushed up to link with the remaining French forces, now under the command of General Moreau. In an epic three-day battle in June on the Trebbia river, Suvorov defeated the hard-fighting French under Macdonald.

These victories convinced Grenville that his master plan, an invasion of France via Switzerland, could now be realized in 1799. Korsakov was now ordered to Switzerland. There he would unite with Charles and drive Massena from his defensive positions. That done, Suvorov would evacuate Italy and unite his army with Korsakov's in Switzerland. Once concentrated, Suvorov would invade France with the Russian armies as originally planned. The Tsar, who had changed his mind about a restoration of the French Monarchy to come to an agreement with the Austrians, now changed it again and consented to this plan.

The Austrian forces were not left out in developing this strategy, but all consideration of their level of support for it was. Once Suvorov arrived in Switzerland, Charles was to evacuate that country and advance along the lower Rhine to tie down French forces on Suvorov's northern flank. An advance in Italy would serve the same purpose on the southern flank. However, the Austrians never intended to operate anywhere close to the Russian invasion route--as events will show.

For the British, the advantage of this plan was that they would have to deal only peripherally with Austria and not depend on her military for their coup de gras. For the Austrians the removal of Suvorov from Italy was also attractive. Since his victory on the Trebbia he had begun the reconquest of Piedmont, which was fine with the Austrians as long as the former King remained in Sardinia. Suvorov, engaging in his penchant for personal political policy, invited the King to return in direct contravention of the Austrian policy.

Another source of irritation was Suvorov's wastage of Austrian troops. Austrian doctrine stressed low casualties as a primary consideration when resorting to battle. In early August Suvorov won another bloody battle against the French at Novi. However, the Austrian forces suffered great losses that violated the Austrian long term goal of maintaining the integrity and combat power of her army. Suvorov's departure might lower the casualty lists.

The fly in the ointment, as it turned out was the destination of the Austrian army under Archduke Charles after the two Russian armies united in Switzerland. As already mentioned, the Austrians never intended to operate within supporting distance of the Russian offensive. Thugut wanted no part of a supporting role to an invasion of France. He wanted to end the campaign as soon as possible and go into winter quarters and prepare for the French counterattacks he knew would come. The problem was not so much that Austrian support was critical, but that the uncooperative environment in which the strategic decision making occurred led to a breakdown in command and control between the various forces. Lack of cooperation on a national level translated itself into lack of military cooperation on the operational level. The three forces effected were Charles' Army (Austrians), Korsakov's Army (Russians and Austrians), and Suvorov's Army (predominantly Russians).

Charles received Thugut's order on August 7, 1799 to move to the *middle Rhine* to besiege Mainz after he had turned the situation over to the Russians.¹² The Austrians would not be within supporting distance of the invasion force and now there was a risk that Korsakov would be isolated and in danger of attack. Five days later Korsakov arrived and he and Charles began to coordinate their turnover.

Suvorov, meanwhile, was still in Italy completing the conquest of Piedmont. It is important to note here that this was a deviation from the plan; Suvorov should have already advanced into the Alps. Communications in that day and age made synchronization of forces difficult at best, especially for the large distances involved between the various theaters. The rugged terrain where much of this fighting took place further exacerbated these problems. Suvorov's deviation was to have critical consequences.

Charles probably intended to delay his departure for Mainz until Suvorov was at least in contact with the Austrian forces that remained in theater to support Korsakov. However, Massena now attacked these Austrian forces, which were in the south holding the only pass through the Alps to Italy. This one stroke severed the line of communication between the coalition forces in

Switzerland and Austria. To make matters worse, Charles and Korsakov quarreled over the movement of Austrian reserves during the French offensive. Doctrinal differences between the Russians and Austrians translated into a strategic mistake. Charles, who had delayed his departure given the military situation, now executed his orders and moved off to the north. This act left approximately 40,000 Russians and Austrians under a divided command to face some 60,000 French under Massena, arguably their best general after Napoleon.

As these events took place, Thugut, in consultation with the British Ambassador, countermaned Charles' orders in order to correct the strategic mistake made in ordering Charles to Mainz. However, Charles received the order too late. While Suvorov fought his way north through the defended passes, Massena attacked and routed Korsakov at Zurich on September 14. Suvorov now conducted one of the great retreats of history, barely rescuing his trapped army by abandoning his guns and scaling the Alps to the east. The Russian army that Grenville had planned to invade France with was no more.

Far to the west, in Holland, another separate tragedy unfolded. Caught up in the enthusiasm of the spring and summer victories, the British had launched their joint invasion of Holland early. This was another deviation from the original plan and had serious consequences. The British landed a division of troops in northern Holland, without waiting for the Russians to arrive, near Den Helder. The British subsequently captured the mutinous Dutch fleet, which was also in the vicinity. The British, however, failed to exploit their bridgehead, waiting instead for the Russian contingent to disembark. Meanwhile the French gathered their forces and defeated a renewed British offensive at the Battle of Bergen exactly five days after the Russians were ruined hundreds of miles to the east.

The Anglo-Russian force then conducted a fighting retreat into their bridgehead. Here the hopelessness of their situation became rapidly apparent. The inadequate defenses of Helder might result in the loss of half their force should they attempt to embark. The weather also deteriorated, threatening to preclude their embarkation. The Duke of York, the overall commander of the

expedition, reluctantly capitulated to the French under General Brune. The terms of the capitulation allowed the Allies to safely evacuate Holland with all their equipment in exchange for approximately 8,000 French prisoners of war. Had the British waited for the Russians it is possible that they would have been able to more quickly exploit the tactical surprise they achieved. However, they accomplished the capture of the Dutch Fleet, which achieved a significant national goal for the British. In doing so they may have forfeited their only chance to accomplish the larger coalition goal of liberating the Dutch.

These defeats spelled the end of the Second Coalition. The Tsar, furious with both Great Britain and Austria, withdrew Russia from the war. In the following year Russia assumed the posture of an armed neutral hostile to Great Britain. Prussia still on the sidelines, prudently remained there. Austria, who had every reason to conclude a separate peace and much enmity toward Great Britain remained at war. The British had misjudged Austria's determination to see the war through.

In review, the War of the Second Coalition ran aground on the rocks of national versus multinational goals and unity of effort. The British, Austrian, and even Russian leaders are to blame for their failure to reconcile these differences before the beginning of hostilities. Their inability to work together as a coalition translated itself to command structure, their fractured and competing strategies, and their unity in the field.

The early successes enjoyed by the coalition only served to hasten the inevitable dichotomy between the strategies of the British and Austrian camps in Switzerland. This dichotomy also led to a dilution of the general effort by the commitment of precious forces in what turned out to be a secondary theater--Holland.

Nevertheless, strategic plans were coordinated on an elementary level. This coordination sufficed as long as the armies executing the different strategies were in different theaters like Italy and Germany. However, when events caused the Austrian and Anglo-Russian strategies to collide with each other in Switzerland, trouble soon developed.

Failure to adhere to the execution of strategic plans compounded an already fractured command and control structure. Suvorov's deviation to conquer Piedmont exacerbated an already serious situation that had developed in Switzerland. If Suvorov had adhered to the higher strategic plan and remained on schedule the presence of his army may have thwarted or minimized Massena's counteroffensive. The turnover between Korsakov and the Archduke Charles was itself the result of an improvisation that could have been avoided months in advance had the British and Austrians been on better terms. The result was that the least imaginative and capable leader, Korsakov, was left isolated and exposed in Switzerland--with Napoleon's best general as an opponent.¹³ The early landing in Holland, too, had been a deviation from the initial Anglo-Russian plan.

The Second Coalition did not achieve unity of effort. On the macro level, the command structures of the individual nations provided unity of effort at a national level. Given the difficulties of communicating in that day and age, the coalition would have been far better served if they had unified their efforts beforehand at a conference along the lines of the one held 14 years later at Trachenberg. In this manner unity could have been generally achieved by referring to published general guidelines that had been agreed to by all the parties. The atmosphere of distrust between Austria and Great Britain prevented such an event taking place.

On a smaller scale, the coalition may yet have persevered if it had unified effort in Switzerland. Instead of one supreme commander in Switzerland there were three. Proper unity of effort at the theater command level would have remedied the situation that developed in Switzerland. Unity was impossible because it required common goals--these the Second Coalition never shared.

Despite the efforts of the architects of this coalition, Tsar Paul of Russia, Baron Thugut of Austria, and particularly Lord Grenville of Great Britain, national goals diverged. Divergence in goals combined with bitter feelings left over from the previous failed coalition to poison the atmosphere. This environment, in turn, discouraged a dialogue favorable to unified strategy,

command, and harmonious execution of the resulting plans. Thus, the coalition lacked unity from its inception and was decisively defeated before Napoleon had even set foot in France.

¹Paul W. Schroeder, "The Collapse of the Second Coalition," *Journal of Modern History* 59 (June 1987), 244.

²Gershoy, 333.

³Schroeder, 250.

⁴Piers Macksey, *Statesmen at War: The Strategy of Overthrow, 1798-1799* (New York: Longman Inc, 1974), 35.

⁵Ibid., 10.

⁶Schroeder, 254.

⁷Benedetto Croce, *History of the Kingdom of Naples*, trans. Frances Frenaye (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 204.

⁸Marshal Macdonald, *Recollections of Marshal Macdonald*, Vol. I, trans. Stephen Louis Simeon, (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1892), 216.

⁹Ibid., 220.

¹⁰Macksey, 49.

¹¹Ibid., 32.

¹²Ibid., 226.

¹³John R. Elting, *Swords Around a Throne* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 140.

CHAPTER 3

TERRIBLE LESSONS--THE COALITIONS FROM 1803 TO 1813

The period between the War of the Second Coalition and the War of German Liberation was a frustrating one from the vantage point of Great Britain and her continental allies. Not only did the coalitions continue to commit the mistakes already catalogued, but most of this period encompassed Napoleon at the peak of his power and potential. This period serves to illustrate two themes essential to the context of the development and improvements of the anti-Napoleonic coalitions--the decline of the French and the improvements of his opponents.

The first theme encompasses the decline of the French. This theme, considered dominant by many as the fundamental reason for Napoleon's demise of 1813, is multidimensional and remains the subject of much debate. The decline can be divided into two parts: the physical and moral decline of the Grand Armee and the decline of Napoleon's personal political and military ability.

The second theme, perhaps the dominant one, is that of improvement. This theme can be divided into two sub areas: improvements in the individual nations and improvements in the way they operated as a multinational force against their common enemy, Napoleon. These improvements came only after some very hard lessons had been administered by Napoleon. The majority of the improvements were made in the first category, by the individual nations themselves. The coalition improvements, on the other hand, were incremental and for the most part still unrealized at the beginning of 1813.

The interrelationship between the elements of the French decline and Allied improvements was in many ways critical to the formation of the final coalition in 1813. The French decline was instrumental in causing the formation of the team of 1813. However, the negative trends within the Grand Armee and Napoleon's policy mistakes, like Spain and the Continental System, remained unexploitable through 1812. Austria tried to take advantage of the French decline in 1809 after she had instituted considerable military reforms. She was defeated after an intense campaign. More power would be required against a Napoleon--at least another coalition of two or more continental powers.

The disaster of the Russian campaign in 1812, whose result was a huge decline in French military manpower, resources, and morale, provided the opportunity for the nations of Europe to again align as a coalition far sooner than would have otherwise occurred. The sum total of Allied improvements and French decline in January of 1813 resulted in a level playing field for the first time in the Napoleonic Wars. The strength of armies, organization, and tactics of the two sides would essentially be the same. Allied enthusiasm for their cause would be counterbalanced by the still magical enthusiasm that Napoleon's leadership and *presence* conveyed to the new conscript army he raised in 1813.

The Allied improvements, as mentioned, included improvements in how coalitions did business. These coalition improvements would not manifest themselves until 1813, but the roots of the improvements can be found by examining the principles critical to the integrity of a coalition: goals, unity of effort, strategic plans, and adherence to plans. First and foremost, the common political goal of any potential coalition clarified itself into the liberation of Germany from the French. The lesson of the Second Coalition demonstrated that without unity of purpose to achieve a common goal, unity in planning, effort, strategy, indeed unity itself, were impossible.

There can be no doubt that the Napoleon's Grand Armee declined during this period. The constant attrition of Napoleon's wars, despite their success in most cases, could have no other result. Most historians agree that the Grand Armee of 1805 was perhaps one of the finest instruments of war ever fashioned by the genius of man.¹ Entropy alone would dictate that this fearsome force would decline. The principal elements, besides the attrition already mentioned, that served to hasten this decline are specific: Spain, Russia, and the declining ethnic French composition of the Grand Armee.

The increasing numbers of non-French contingents in the French armies insignificantly affected the Grand Armee when compared with the other factors. Except for the Neapolitans, Napoleon got more out of his Germans, Italians, Croats, Swiss, Poles, Dutch, and others than is generally recognized. Outright defections and betrayals only became common in 1813, and then mostly within the German contingents. Even so, many (the Poles for instance), were to follow him into France for the campaign of 1814. Under Napoleon's personal direction these men discharged their duties responsibly and occasionally with great courage. For examples one need only look at the Saxon cavalry at Borodino and the Germans of Victor's Corps at the Berezina.²

The real gutting of Napoleon's army came at the extremes--east and west. Spain was a "bleeding ulcer" whereas Russia was a relatively swift decapitation. The result, however, was the same--stupendous losses of combat experienced manpower. Added to this purely physical loss was the loss of enthusiasm and panache through the combat deaths of talented leaders like Lasalle, Lannes, and Gudin.

Spain, however, was to prove a mixed blessing for the Allies. By 1813 it was the only repository of trained combat units and manpower really left to Napoleon. Much of Napoleon's miracle in the recreation of his Grand Armee in 1813 was to be a result of his liberal plundering of the Spanish theater for veterans around which to build his new cadres.

Finally there was the decline of Napoleon himself. Napoleon's own assessment of a general's time for war has already been alluded to in chapter 1. According to Napoleon's calculation he had passed his prime in 1811. However, Napoleon's victories in 1813 and 1814 provided numerous contradictions of this thesis. Napoleon's decline was above all political. Of Napoleon's miscalculations, those in the realm of statesmanship were the primary reason for his demise. Russia and Spain are the most obvious examples of Napoleon's political blundering. His duplicitous actions in 1806 and 1813 that led to war with Prussia and Austria, respectively, also support this thesis. His genius for war inclined him to invariably seek military solutions to his political problems. Because of this inclination he resorted to war on an unprecedented, and in the final analysis unwarranted, scale.

Which brings us to the subject of the Allies and their improvements. These improvements would never have occurred as rapidly as they did without Napoleon. Austria, Russia, and above all Prussia were to institute enormous reforms in the wake of their defeats at the hands of Napoleon. The British experience further supports this point. Since the British Army suffered no major defeats at the hands of the French, their basic military formations and doctrine remained essentially unchanged.

Key to understanding the resurgence of Prussia was the explosive nationalism and patriotic fervor that grew with every year of French domination in Germany after 1806. When General Yorck, commander of Napoleon's Prussian contingent in Russia, concluded the convention of Tauroggen on new years' day of 1813 with the Russians, he lit the fuse of German nationalism. This fuse had been sputtering and smoldering ever since the catastrophic defeat of the vaunted Prussian war machine, the legacy of Frederick the Great, at the twin battles of Jena-Auerstadt. This disaster, and the subsequent humiliating of treatment of Prussia by Napoleon, resulted in a wave of patriotism and reform. This patriotism spontaneously and briefly ignited

into outright rebellion during the war of the Fifth Coalition in 1809 and culminated in the 1813 War of German liberation.

The Prussian reforms following the defeat of 1806 may never have been possible had Napoleon's victory been less complete. The catastrophe undermined the authority of King Frederick William III and the conservatives to such a degree that both political and military reforms were rapidly achieved. Political and military reformers like Baron Stein, General Gneisenau, and General Scharnhorst were now given a relatively free hand. The most important political development relative to the military equation was the freeing of the Prussian serfs. The military reformers now had a huge pool of grateful manpower that they could potentially exploit.

Napoleon's limitations on the size of the Prussian army were circumvented by Scharnhorst's famed *Krumpersystem*. This system built up trained cadres through the early discharge of active soldiers into an inactive reserve. Arrangements were also made to mobilize a militia, the Landwehr, in the event of a general war. The French idea of the nation in arms had migrated to Prussia.

The other reform that served as the linchpin for the Prussian military renaissance was the reorganization of the general staff by Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. Again, ironically, this institution was a by product of Napoleon, reconstructed by Scharnhorst into a "proposed collective brain of the Prussian army to be pitted against the individual genius of Napoleon."³

Austria's improvements, in many ways, mirrored those of the Prussians, but on a smaller scale. Austria had already implemented limited reforms, principally under the influence of the Archduke Charles, in the wake of her defeat in 1805. The substance of her reforms involved modernization of her armed forces, wholesale adoption of French tactical methods, improvements to her mobilization process, and the acceptance of the necessity of a Landwehr. Nevertheless, these reforms failed to provide the margin for victory in 1809. Their impact, however, was

recognizable in Napoleon's rebuke of a minister who impugned the Austrian military, "It is evident that you were *not* [italics mine] at Wagram."⁴

Austria's defeat in 1809 resulted in another round of reforms. Archduke Charles' influence waned as the Emperor turned to Prince Schwarzenberg and his able chief of staff, General Count Radetzky, to implement further reform within the Austrian Army. Radetzky was given virtual carte blanche as chief of the quartermaster general staff in implementing reform. His reforms included professional education for officers and improvements to the staff services of intelligence and cartography.⁵ Just as important was the wholesale house cleaning that took place in the ranks of the senior leadership, as evidenced by Radetzky's own appointment. The increase in the influence of Prince Schwarzenberg marked the emergence of a more politically astute type of general for the Austrians, what we would today call a "team builder." His ability to work within the confines of a coalition, ironically honed in his service to Napoleon in Russia, was to pay large dividends in 1813.⁶

Were there any Russian improvements? The trends already mentioned with respect to Landwehr and militia, tactics, and leadership apply also, in varying degrees, to Russia. Under the influence of Suvorov, Russia had already adopted the column as the primary tactical formation of attack nearly simultaneously with the same development in France. The Tsar's magnanimous comment in 1814 to a roomful of his defeated enemies was: "if on our side we have gained a certain skill, to whom do we owe it? Why, the terrible lessons you used to give us have ended by turning to our advantage."⁷ It was in the mind and heart of the Tsar that Russia's improvements were most evident. Alexander's will was the dominant factor, from the rapprochement at Tilsit to the abandonment of Moscow in 1812. It was this war-hardened resolve combined with modest military improvements and the reorganization of his vast army that made it such a lethal force from 1812 on.

So it was that the “terrible lessons” effected improvements in the individual nations, yet individually they could not defeat Napoleon. How did the nations of Europe operate collectively as a team against Napoleon during this period? Further examination of their joint actions reveals that the Allied coalitions were still not unified in strategy, effort, and operations planning on the advent of the liberation of Germany in 1813. However, the way to success was much clearer in 1813 than it had been in 1805 because of the harsh lessons they absorbed.

First and foremost, the coalition formed in 1804-1805 never completely disintegrated. Great Britain's refusal to come to terms with Napoleon was the reason. Britain's economic well being, a national security interest in modern parlance, was the initial cause of the war. Great Britain's goals were the restoration of access to continental markets and removal of the French threat to her trade routes. On the continent this meant an independent Holland. In the Mediterranean this meant the ouster of France from Italy and the Ionian islands. These goals varied little from those of the previous war.

Great Britain's problem was, as it had always been, her lack of an army of sufficient size and availability (remember her colonial commitments) to achieve territorial military objectives in continental Europe. Great Britain must always act within the framework of a coalition in Europe in partnership with a power or powers of sufficient military strength. Thus, the British were always ready to finance another coalition. The essential fact was that these wars, and their respective coalitions, always had as their backdrop the continuous conflict between Great Britain and France. The wars would continue until a lasting settlement was reached between these two nations. Great Britain was the cornerstone of the foundation upon which all the coalitions were built.

The fundamental conflict Great Britain and France brought with it the baggage of the basic British goals listed above as new coalitions were formed against Napoleon. Did the other nations of Europe share these goals? Yes and no. These goals also satisfied Austrian and Russian interests--but for different reasons.

For Russia the ejection of the French from Italy and the Ionian Islands would assist in her goal of gaining influence in the Mediterranean, presumably at French expense. Liberation and independence of the Netherlands would help open avenues of trade, now under French control, which were vital to the Russians. Great Britain's brutal treatment of the Danes had essentially closed the Baltic to Anglo-Russian commerce and Russia's ongoing problems with the Ottoman Turks closed off their other warm water route of access via the high seas. This meant that trade must flow through neutral Prussia and northern Germany, threatened in 1804 by the French presence in Holland and closed off after the defeats of 1805.

For Austria, aching to regain Italy, Britain's goals in the Mediterranean were in accord with her plans as long as she regained her former status in Italy. Austria's only concern with respect to the Netherlands was that Prussia did not gain any more influence in northern Germany. Austria also hoped that any defeat of France would improve her position in central Europe. Finally, resolution of the commercial war between Britain and France would be in everybody's, including neutral Prussia's, best economic interest.

The Third Coalition's goals were articulated and formalized by a series of treaties. The principal treaty was the Convention of St. Petersburg signed in April 1805 between the Russians and the British. Terms included the adoption of the British goals already listed: specifically in the form of an independent Holland and a Kingdom of Sardinia. The accord also called for the assembly of a congress at the end of the war to resolve the map of Europe.⁸

The convention of St. Petersburg is important, not only as the foundation for the Third Coalition, but as a template that anticipated the final accommodation reached at the end of these wars at the Congress of Vienna. Another key aspect of this treaty was Britain's willingness to *compromise* with Russia on the issue of Malta.⁹ Great Britain's willingness to surrender Malta to secure Russia's participation was astonishing. It was the first time during this period that a nation compromised on this scale for the sake of the coalition. The significance of this compromise becomes more apparent when Britain's failure to surrender Malta to the French, the technical reason for the start of the war in the first place, is taken into account.

The Austrian initial commitment came via the Convention of Parma with Russia in November 1804 committing over 300,000 Austrians and Russians to operations.¹⁰ Austria, as usual was to bear the lion's share of the effort while the Tsar agreed to use his influence with the British to obtain subsidies for Austria. The convention was notable for its promise by the parties not to sign a separate peace and lack of a joint war plan.¹¹ Once the British and Russian governments agreed to ratify the convention of St. Petersburg, the Austrians were persuaded to accede and join the Third Coalition under its terms. However, the Austrians refused to ratify the St. Petersburg Convention because it only subsidized 235,000 Austrians with British pounds--the Austrians wanted an amount commensurate with 320,000 men. As in the Second Coalition the British and Austrians squabbled until the eleventh hour, when they signed yet another subsidy agreement in August 1805.¹²

On the surface these goals appeared sound--they were shared by the coalition members. However, the process in which these goals were formalized by the Allies again followed the ruinous pattern of years past. The treaties between the major partners were, without exception, bilateral agreements, negotiated secretly, and not one overarching document encompassing all the parties to the coalition. More important, these treaties did not lend themselves to a successful

strategy for the defeat of France. They provided only the most general guidance and principally enumerated resources, men, and money. As mentioned, the Austro-Russian treaty provided for no joint war plan or coalition command structure and was left to the whim of the Austrian command structure for implementation. The resulting disaster is hardly surprising given these initial conditions.

In 1805, 1806, and 1809 Napoleon decisively concluded each war with campaigns in central Europe. In contrast, the British, Russians, and initially the Austrians all dedicated substantial, and in some cases their main, military effort against the flanks: Italy and the Netherlands. The problem for the Allies was that they never saw, as Napoleon did, that the road to Italy and the Netherlands lay through central Europe because of the geography and politics of the protagonists. What the Allies needed was to defeat Napoleon in central Europe--but for Great Britain, and to a lesser extent for Russia and Austria, this was counter to the territorial objectives that they really wanted to achieve.¹³

Great Britain and Russia saw the fruits of their efforts result in a more dangerous situation than before the war as the Third Coalition collapsed. Austria, by the Treaty of Pressburg, was completely out of the equation and Prussia was temporarily cowed. Britain's efforts to restore the independence of the Netherlands had led to the loss of King George's electoral lands in Hanover. The conduit between Russia and Great Britain through northern Germany was, for the first time, shut. Britain's focus, of necessity, was now expanded to include the restoration of Hanover, and therefore intervention in German affairs, to her laundry list of objectives.

The issue of goals saw evolutionary improvement in the case of Prussia and the Fourth Coalition. Napoleon's two-faced miscalculation in offering Hanover back to Great Britain during peace negotiations backfired and brought Prussia out of her decade of neutrality into hostilities with France. Prussia's goal in this war was nothing less than the total withdrawal of France from

Germany and Napoleon's acceptance of the "principle of a confederation of north German states."¹⁴ This was the first appearance of the idea of withdrawal of France from Germany (at least that part east of the Rhine). Whether Great Britain and Russia fully concurred in this goal was immaterial. They finally had Prussia on their side after more than ten frustrating years of attempting to persuade Prussia to abandon her neutrality in their favor. The concept of the withdrawal of France from Germany would, in time and in light of what followed from Prussia's catastrophic defeat, evolve into the liberation of Germany.

This development was an evolutionary milestone, because the liberation of Germany now assumed greater importance as a goal for both Great Britain and Russia. For Russia and Great Britain Napoleon's triumph in Germany added to their woes in communicating and trading with each other. More seriously, Prussia's defeat and occupation meant that a buffer no longer existed between the French Empire and Russia. The Tsar's interests were now territorially threatened on the continent, especially in Poland. Necessity had finally enforced the reality of the liberation of Germany as a common goal for any future coalition.

The major commitment of British troops in the Iberian peninsula may be the most important development with respect to Great Britain's national contribution during this period. It provided a vehicle for the long term employment of British troops on the continent. The Spanish War not only addressed Britain's national security concerns, but it indirectly contributed to a dilution of French efforts elsewhere for the remainder of the wars. The commitment of substantial French assets in Spain now provided the opportunity for Austria to again take the field.

Austria's war in 1809 serves to further emphasize that any peripheral goals were subordinate to Germany. Austria now assumed the lead in the crusade to liberate Germany that Prussia had so incompetently initiated. The spirit of German patriotism and the crusading nature of this war are captured by the address of Archduke Charles to his army on the advent of

hostilities: “The liberty of Europe has taken refuge under your banner; your victories will loosen its fetters, and your German brothers, now arrayed in the ranks of the enemy, await *liberation* [italics mine] at your hands.”¹⁵ Charles’ tone belies a new passion in Austria’s commitment with respect to Germany. This speech has a familiar, almost revolutionary, tone reminiscent of the proclamations to the troops of the *levee en masse* in revolutionary France.

The Fifth Coalition was, in many ways, the most challenging Napoleon faced since the wars began in 1803. This challenge was an outgrowth of the *deliberate* method Austria employed in pursuing her goal: improving her army while biding her time for the right opportunity to strike. The example of a revolt in Germany in the light of a Napoleonic setback in another theater (Spain in this case) was established. This example would be imitated on a grander scale in 1813. In any event, Austria’s goal of liberating Germany was probably unrealistic given the neutrality of Russia and Prussia. The Napoleonic challenge required a coalition of continental powers.

In summary, the period of 1805 to 1813 witnessed the emergence of the liberation of Germany as a common goal for the continental belligerent. Great Britain recognized this development but continued to pursue her parochial objectives in the Netherlands and Italy, even after she was heavily engaged in Spain. In 1813 Great Britain recognized a coalition main effort in *Germany* as the best means to obtain her goals with respect to Italy and the Netherlands.

The evolution of coalition goals, from a focus on the territory of the flanks to a focus on Germany, was accompanied by a similar evolution in strategy. The original national interests and war aims of the European states opposed to Napoleon did not change, they remained in existence as new interests and aims came to the fore with every new Napoleonic victory (or setback, as in the case of Spain). What did change was the relative importance of these goals with respect to each other. Napoleon’s military successes had the ironic result of unifying his opposition. Thus the liberation of Germany became more and more important and finally assumed primacy as the

common coalition goal in 1813. The corresponding strategies of the various coalitions followed the same crooked path. It was in the area strategy that many of the greatest errors in anti-Napoleonic coalition warfare were made. Divergent goals led to divergent, and often counterproductive, strategies.

In the case of the Third Coalition, Jomini recounts that the Allied “diversions” on the flanks were fatal to their cause.¹⁶ He misses the point, the efforts on the flanks were *not* diversions, they were the main effort. The strategies of the Third Coalition were developed along two independent lines. The Anglo-Russia strategic plan called for the commitment of forces to Italy through Naples and northern Germany through Hanover. From Hanover the Anglo-Russians would liberate the Netherlands. In Italy the Anglo-Russian effort was of direct importance to the Austrians plan of action in northern Italy. The French would be caught in a vise and ejected from Italy as the Austrians advanced from the northeast and the Anglo-Russians advanced from the south. The campaign in Italy was the only location where the action of all three primary coalition partners would be unified.

The second line of strategy was that of the Austrians and Russians. The main effort for this strategy was also in Italy, where an army under the Archduke Charles was to reconquer that country. A second effort was also planned for southern Germany, where the slow-moving Russians would eventually unite with the Austrians and then move together on France. The problem with this strategy, the brainchild of Feldmarschalleutnant Baron Karl Mack, was that it assumed the offensive on all fronts. The Austrian goal was to gain Italy, not invade France.

The two lines of strategy had the unintended effect of offering Napoleon the opportunity to concentrate his forces, including those set aside for the defense of the flanks, in central Europe to deliver a knockout blow to Austria before the slow-moving Russians became a factor. Austria was critical to the coalition because of her geographic position in central Europe. With a neutral

Prussia, Austria was also critical as the territorial link between the various theaters of the war and as a conduit for the direct action of Russian forces. Austria should have been critical because of her army, it will be remembered that she was supposed to supply some 320,000 men.

Austria was, in fact, the weak link in this coalition. She compromised her national interests to join the Third Coalition. Austria, of all the potential coalition partners, was the most vulnerable to Napoleon. Austria's problem was that she was not ready for war. Her army was in a shambles and she had not recovered financially from the long wars of the previous decade. Early in 1804 Archduke Charles, the Austrian Minister for War, submitted to the Emperor a memorandum which said that Austria was unready for war. It further stated that "even if the military operations were successful, the country's economy and prosperity would be ruined."¹⁷

The Emperor, under the influence of the pro-Russian foreign minister Cobenzl, ignored Charles' assessment. He began negotiations with the Russians while he searched for an advisor who would give him better news on the readiness of the Austrian military for war. He found his man in the person of Mack. Rothenberg's terse commentary on this choice is pertinent.

It speaks volumes about the atmosphere at the Viennese court that such a man, grandiose in his plans, presumptuous and vain, incapable in execution and unlucky for good measure, should have been seriously regarded as an authority for the conduct of war against Napoleon.¹⁸

In summary, two strategies had been worked out in two distinct camps, with Russia keeping a foot in each camp. The experience of the Revolutionary wars was counter to the strategy chosen, in each case, to achieve the stated goals. In 1799 Italy had been reconquered and substantial Anglo-Russian forces had been deployed to Holland, yet the triumph of the French in Switzerland and then in Germany at Hohenlinden (Marengo aside) had been the seminal events in the defeat of the Allies. The Austro-Russian strategy concentrated on Italy instead of recognizing the importance of Germany to the defense of a very vulnerable Austria. The Anglo-Russian

strategy suffered from the same fault. The results in both cases were operations taken to achieve goals in geographic regions that had historically not influenced on the outcome of the war.

Much of the blame for these flawed strategies is directly attributable to the fractured way in which they were developed. The Anglo-Russian strategy was tied directly to its territorial goals, but months of diplomatic haggling over issues of force structure, and vain attempts to recruit Prussia, delayed development and execution of a strategic plan. By the time troops were in place Napoleon's Grand Armee was deep in central Europe threatening Austria's capital.

The Austro-Russian strategy plan suffered from the reverse faults. It was the product of one man and was implemented in haste in the one theater where caution and deliberate action were most called for, Germany. If its primary focus was always Italy, then why did Mack act so aggressively in Bavaria? The answer, as previously discussed, had much to do with Mack's character. He improvised when there was already a plan in place that called for a union with the Russians under Kutusov. Perhaps Mack felt that a defense as far forward as possible was in order until the Russians arrived. But the strategy did not call for defense. It called for an offense into France that was sure to bring a strong French reaction. That Mack should have waited for the Russians was, with hindsight, obvious. That the Austrians and Russians should have been on the offensive at all in southern Germany, given their main effort was in Italy, makes no sense at all.

This was not the case in the strategic plan in 1809. Austria had an impassioned army that was, despite the Archduke Charles' misgivings, a much more prepared and ready force than that of 1805. Her dilemma was in the timing of hostilities. The opportunity afforded by the diversion of Napoleon and the bulk of his army in Spain might have been lost if she had not acted quickly. This was to have the unfortunate consequence of preventing the full realization of the Austrian military potential--specifically the medieval mechanisms of the Insurrectio in Hungary and the

Ban of Croatia.¹⁹ These pools of manpower were just fulfilling their quotas as Napoleon concentrated for Wagram.

Nevertheless, Austria's approach in 1809 was much improved. Her strategy concentrated on dealing a knockout blow to the French and Bavarians before the arrival of Napoleon and reinforcements from Spain. Austria's misfortune was that she continued to chase the chimera of Italy with substantial forces. True, Italy was a territorial goal, and it was important strategically, as its neglect in 1796-97 proved. But the defeat of France could not be accomplished in Italy. That Napoleon never personally campaigned in Italy after 1800 is one indication of this. A strategy of dual offensives in both theaters, therefore, dwindled away what little advantage Austria had. As respectable as Austria's performance was in 1809, in the final analysis she just did not have the military means to take on Napoleon by herself in central Europe.

Flawed strategies, in all the coalitions, led to flawed plans. Strategy determined *where* the military effort would be and the plans (the articulation of the operational level of war) published the details of *how* the strategy would be executed. The evolution and incorporation of the "terrible lessons" learned during 1805-1812 developed into a method of war to oppose Napoleon. The experience of Spain proved that the French were beatable. Austria's experience in 1805 led to a modified plan in 1809 that attempted to deal the knockout blow before Napoleon's arrival. Unfortunately for the Austrians, Marshal Davout corrected the faulty dispositions that Berthier had made prior to and immediately after hostilities had begun. This piece of bad luck (for the Austrians) was compounded by poor execution in Germany and Italy by the Austrian commanders, the Archdukes Charles and John. Nevertheless, her plan was fundamentally sound.

The next step in the evolution of a coalition method to fight Napoleon can be found in Russia. It was in 1812 that the indirect approach with respect to Napoleon himself was, unwittingly perhaps, confirmed as an operational method to defeat him in the field. In Russia the

distances and forces involved precluded Napoleon's presence everywhere. The flank forces commanded by Napoleon's lieutenants were inadequate, in the long run, to the task of defeating their Russian counterparts or protecting Napoleon's lines of communication. The result was that Napoleon and the Grand Armee were almost cut off in their retreat at the Beresina. But a powerful lesson was again administered by Napoleon in person as he masterfully, some would say miraculously, escaped from the trap with the core of his army's surviving talent. Kutusov had perhaps learned this lesson too well and allowed the other commanders, Wittgenstein and Tschitsagov, to experience the genius of a roused and desperate Napoleon. Another example of Wellington's famous statement that Napoleon's "presence on the field made the difference of forty thousand men" had been added at the Beresina.²⁰ A French army without Napoleon was then morally equivalent to being 40,000 troops weaker, using the reverse logic.

The other salient point of the Russian experience is that of withdrawal in the face of Napoleon. The Russians, of course, could afford to do this. However, Austria had essentially done the same thing in 1809 after her defeat in Bavaria. She may have been better served if she had performed a similar withdrawal into the eastern parts of the Hapsburg dominions vice fighting it out at Wagram. Barclay de Tolly, more by accident, and Kutusov, intentionally after Borodino, avoided direct combat with Napoleon. The wisdom of this strategy was not lost on the general staffs in Berlin and Vienna, both of whom had commanders in the field that personally observed the results from the French side on the flanks.

Goals and strategic plans aside, it was in the area of unity of effort that the anti-Napoleonic coalitions were the most deficient. Unity through a common coalition goal or set of goals was the essential first step. National goals evolved into the common goal--the liberation of Germany. However, unified strategy and planning remained persistent problems throughout the

period. Unity of strategy and command, translated into a workable plan, had not been realized during the Third through Fifth Coalitions at other than a *national* level.

Perhaps the greatest lesson learned by Europe at the advent of 1813 was that it needed to unite as one to make effective common cause against Napoleon. Certainly the British realized this from the beginning but were unable to achieve it until it was brutally apparent to everyone else. The French disaster in Russia provided the nations of Europe a common opportunity to unite and defeat Napoleon.

Fighting alone against Napoleon had catastrophic consequences for Prussia in 1806, Austria in 1809, and even Russia in the period leading up to Napoleon's retreat in 1812. The idea that every nation possible was needed as a soldier in the combined cause against Napoleon was to be so ingrained in the European consciousness that it would lead to a great deal of misguided effort and importance being placed on the recruitment of Sweden in 1813. The essential coalition had to be composed of Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, and above all, as events will show, Austria.

Once united these nations needed to be unified in their command and strategy. Here was where the evolution of a common or shared goal was most important. The liberation of Germany became the common thread that served as a concrete objective in a unified strategy to defeat Napoleon. Its liberation would not only serve the national interests of the coalition members, but it would attract, and hopefully defeat, Napoleon's main effort. It was in Germany, not Italy or Spain, that he *personally* fought.

Despite all of the diplomatic shuttling back and forth between London, Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg, the Allies had still not unified their political discussions and their attendant agreements. Even when goals and strategies were shared, the failure to meet prior to hostilities and get it all down on paper with everyone's signature led to inevitable misunderstandings about how to conduct the wars. Great Britain, of all the powers, always attempted to build as much of a

consensus as possible between the fractious continental opponents of Napoleon. What little planning the Allies codified and ratified served them better than none at all. Prussia, for example, learned this lesson in 1806 the hard way when she proceeded against Napoleon without regard to the inputs of Great Britain and Russia.

Napoleon was not constrained by the need to consult with his "allies." His goals, strategy, and plans always achieved unity within his own mind. For the Allies it was not that easy. When a semi-unified plan did emerge from the mind of one man, in 1805, it was none other than Mack-- and he failed to execute his part as written. Too often the plans put together to defeat Napoleon were not the result of considered, deliberate council between the generals and leaders of the coalition nations. Blinded by their confidence in their ability to defeat Napoleon, the Allies proceeded from treaties and conventions to operations in the field, skipping the essential interim step of meeting in a military as well as diplomatic environment to hammer out a unified plan. Another reason for the lack of development in this sphere was that after 1805, excepting Great Britain, there were really no other continental partners around to plan with. Prussia's headlong advance in Saxony in 1806 never allowed the Russians any more input than a promise to help and a hasty treaty before hostilities began.

Lack of unity in the coalition before hostilities was further compounded by disunity after operations began. Lack of cooperation in the field was the primary manifestation of this disunity. Mack's failure to wait for the Russians in 1805 and the same mistake by the Prussians in 1806 are examples. Admittedly, the temptation for these nations to act individually against France was great. The experiences of 1805 and 1806 were to teach the pitfalls of agreeing to one plan but executing another. Additionally, there was no one person or council with true overall coalition command authority for most of these wars. This was no surprise since it reflected the state of affairs of the nations as they took the field individually against Napoleon. The result was often

armies working without regard to one another toward their own limited theater goals--or in the case of Prussia in 1806 with no clear goals for any of her armies at all. Only Napoleon and Wellington achieved the sort of unity and span of control needed for this new type of warfare prior to 1813.

In review, the decline of the French, combined with the improvements of his opponents had leveled the playing field by 1813. However, coalition warfare remained an imperfect science at the end of this period. The potential of this form of warfare was not realized for a variety of reasons. Primarily, coalition warfare against Napoleon required a level of cooperation that was beyond the experience of the nations of Europe. The "terrible lessons" administered by Napoleon caused substantial individual improvements in the policies and militaries of his opponents. At the end of 1812 the ability of the nations of Europe to work together as a coalition to defeat Napoleon remained an unrealized potential.

This potential had achieved great promise in the evolution of a common goal, the liberation of Germany, which would serve as the glue that would bind the coalition formed in 1813. But it remained no more than a promise. With this goal came also the promise of a strategy that would ensure the proper focus. Germany, inflamed by patriotic fervor and armed via British gold, would serve as favorable and supportive battleground for the coming coalition, much in the same manner as Spain. The Allies would additionally have the advantage of facing a defeated and demoralized foe. Face him they would, because Napoleon would never relinquish Germany without a fight. Germany was the heart Napoleon's own coalition, the Confederation of the Rhine, and critical to the defense of his empire.

Meeting, planning, and publishing a workable strategic plan remained essentially a national task during this period, if conducted at all. British diplomatic correspondence screams in protest at lack of cooperation between the allies. Most of the meetings conducted between states

remained at the diplomatic level and never migrated into interstaff planning or working groups. Treaties resulted that articulated goals clearly, but merely assigned financial support and promised numbers of troops without regard to their operational employment.

On a multinational level, adherence to the adopted strategy in the execution of plans did not occur during this period either. Frequently a unified strategic plan for the coalition did not exist. The Third Coalition might lay claim to a unified strategy of sorts, but its strategy was flawed at the outset--the center of gravity was in central Europe, not on the flanks. Additionally, Mack irrationally deviated from the portion of the strategy that did address central Europe. Mack's defeat provided an example of the danger of major deviations from strategy, even flawed strategy.

Finally, there was the principle of unity of effort. The nations of Europe were always looking beyond the defeat of France to a final settlement in Europe. This was not a bad practice, except that they often made their decisions in a sort of vacuum that was always shattered by the reality of French victory. First things first. In Prussia's case this practice kept her out of the Third Coalition altogether. Napoleon would only be defeated by a combination of all the major powers. Once united they would still have the very substantial problem of how to command and control all their forces. The experience of the coalitions of 1803-1812 provided them very little of practical value in addressing this military problem on a multinational basis. The hard school of combat operations in 1813 would provide the environment in which to devise a solution.

All these lessons and challenges, however painful, were on the table at the end of 1812 as the pitiful, frozen, and dispirited remains of the Grand Armee limped into Germany. As the passion of the moment built, Europe burst again into the flames of general war. A new Allied coalition would now have the opportunity to apply the wisdom imparted by these lessons.

¹Chandler, chap. 32 *passim*.

²Riehn, 253, 384.

³Weigly, 460.

⁴Felix Markham, *Napoleon* (London: The New American Library, 1963), 183.

⁵Radetzky at first tried to turn the appointment down, Francis' response was: "Your character guarantees that you will not make stupid mistakes on purpose, and if you merely make ordinary mistakes, that I am already used to." Michael Samerdyke, "Smoke in Their Faces," *Military History* (October 1992): 18.

⁶Craig, 5.

⁷Duchesse de Reggio, *Memoirs of Marshal Oudinot Duc de Reggio*, Compiled from the souvenirs of the Duchesse de Reggio by Gaston Stengler and translated into English by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Appleton and Company, 1897), 272.

⁸Gershoy, 394.

⁹Christopher D. Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, 1803-1815* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 114.

¹⁰Sir Archibald Alison, *Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir C. Stewart, the Second and Third Marquesses of Londonderry with the Annals of Contemporary Events in which They Bore a Part*, Vol I (London: William Black, Wood and Son, 1861), 190.

¹¹Gershoy, 77-78.

¹²Alison, 191-192.

¹³Baron Henri Jomini, *Precis de l'art de la Guerre*, from Roots of Strategy, Vol II (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1987), 515.

¹⁴Gershoy, 412.

¹⁵Ibid., 438.

¹⁶Jomini, 515.

¹⁷Rothenberg, 76.

¹⁸Mack, it will be remembered, had been the leader of the disastrous Neapolitan attempt to liberate Rome. Ibid., 77.

¹⁹The Hungarian Insurrectio and Croatian Ban were feudal levys that were authorized in time of war and required approval by the Hungarian Diet and the Banus (governor) of Croatia. In 1809 they were theoretically capable of supplying 100,000 militia type troops for the Austrian Armies, but in fact provided only about 40,000 poorly trained and poorly equipped troops who fought for the most part in Dalmatia and Hungary. Robert M. Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory* (University of Kansas Press, 1994), chap.3, and F.L. Petre, *Napoleon and the Archduke Charles* (London: John Lane and Co., 1909), Chapter II.

²⁰Philip Henry, 5th Earl of Stanhope, *Notes of Conversations with the Duke of Wellington* (London: John Murray, 1889), 9.

CHAPTER 4

FORMATION OF THE SIXTH COALITION--SPRING 1813

We content ourselves here with saying, that, by its articles, the Prussian corps is declared neutral, and a district assigned to it as neutral ground in Prussian Lithuania on the Russian frontier. Should the convention be rejected by either of the sovereigns, the Prussians obtained a free march home in the shortest direction; but engaged themselves, should the rejection take place on the part of the King of Prussia, not to serve against the Russians for the space of two months.¹

The rapprochement of the Prussian and Russians at Taurrogen marked the spiritual beginning of the Sixth Coalition. The outgrowth of this event was the rebellion of Prussia against Napoleon. For the first time since 1807, two major continental powers were united in arms against the French. Despite the improvements of Napoleon's opponents, the weakness and demoralization of the French, the unexpected (to the French) neutrality of Austria, and the wavering of Napoleon's allies in the Confederation of the Rhine, Napoleon emerged victorious at the conclusion of the spring campaign in 1813.

Nevertheless, the Sixth Coalition outperformed its predecessors. The common goal and unity of effort formed the coalition's solid foundation. However, Russia and Prussia discovered the inadequacy of their strategic plan for the reconquest of Germany in May 1813 as Napoleon drove them back. Once they abandoned their plan they abandoned the initiative. Adherence to the plan made no sense. However, another strategic plan was required to resume the contest. Once adopted, the plan's execution must be adhered to. The armistice provided the coalition time to address both a strategic plan and adherence to its execution-- time to improve collectively as well as individually.

The rejuvenated coalition had again been defeated, but not on the same scale as in years past. Napoleon had administered defeats that would have caused the other coalitions to collapse. The Sixth Coalition survived for three reasons. Its forces were still intact, the common goal of the liberation of Germany remained intact, but had not yet been achieved, and the coalition anticipated resuming hostilities with the full military support of Austria. Time was on the coalition's side.

True, Napoleon defeated the main armies *tactically*, but they were still in possession of more territory at the conclusion of the spring campaign than they had been in January 1813. More important, the armies which suffered these tactical defeats remained intact. Despite the demoralizing retreat to Silesia, the Prussian element and many secondary Russian forces on the flanks remained eager to fight. The coalition's goals and unity of effort were on far firmer ground than any of its predecessors had ever been after similar drubbings. It did not break up as Napoleon had hoped it would.

But the Sixth Coalition was still only a shadow of what it would be later that fateful year. It had many problems yet to resolve. In spite of the unity of effort produced by the common goal of the liberation of Germany, the coalition would almost founder in the last days before the armistice. Differences in Prussian and Russian tactical doctrine, various command crises, and differing approaches to strategy all caused problems for the coalition to varying degrees. These problems were bad enough in victory; unexpected defeats and the loss of initiative imposed by Napoleon exacerbated them. It was a battered, wiser, leadership that accepted the armistice offered by Napoleon.

The leaders of the Sixth Coalition realized, including Austria, they needed time. Time was on their side because the Grand Armee, Napoleon's organizational brilliance aside, would never be resurrected as anything but a ghost of its former self. Time was needed to organize,

receive, and issue weapons and uniforms paid for by Great Britain; train new recruits; and plan.

Austria recognized this essential fact most clearly, Metternich stating it best:

An Armistice will be the greatest of blessings. . .It will give us an opportunity to get to know each other, to concert military measures with the Allies and to bring reinforcements to the most threatened points.²

The new Sixth Coalition had parts of two of the four principles well in hand: goals and unity of effort. These proved not enough. Time was needed to address the principle of strategic plans--“concert military measures”-- thereby improving unity. Then the time would be ripe to adhere to the unified execution of these plans and liberate Germany. The Sixth Coalition, therefore, bought itself time to improve *as a coalition*.

A continuation of the continental war that resumed in 1812 was hardly a certainty. The actions of the Prussians at Taurrogen and, to a lesser extent, the Austrians under Prince Schwarzenberg in the south were critical to the continuation of hostilities against the French. The state of affairs of the Russians as they herded the pitiful remains of the Grand Armee from Russia further illuminates the Russian decision to continue their advance. This was because the campaign of 1812 had been more than just a French catastrophe. The Russians had lost at least a quarter of a million men killed.³ Because of these losses the Russians had just over 150,000 men, including reserves and replacements coming up, to fight the French. Additionally, the Tsar’s overall military commander Marshal Kutusov, satisfied with having driven the French from Holy Russia, now counseled peace. A Russian advance was not a certainty. Kutusov reinforced his views with one of the most lackluster pursuits in history, leaving to cold, hunger, and exhaustion the business of further diminishing the ranks of the Grand Armee.

Nevertheless, Alexander ordered a massive new round of conscription on December 12, 1812. He did this in order to replace his losses vice as preparation for a massive offensive into Germany. It also served the purpose of keeping Russia prepared for the possibility that the French

might turn and continue the fight inside Russia. The “French” armies theoretically could field more troops than the Russians. They would soon dispose of over 190,000 men with which to defend Poland and Germany. Napoleon had indeed instructed the new commander of the Grand Armee Marshall Murat to defend along the Nieman if possible.⁴

The strength of the Grand Armee was a facade. The units least affected by the disaster in Russia were those on the flanks belonging to Marshal Macdonald and Prince Schwarzenberg. The majority of these flank forces were composed of Prussians and Austrians whose loyalty to Napoleon was questionable at best. Defection or neutralization of these erstwhile French allies would completely weight the military equation in Russia’s favor.

This is exactly what happened. The manner in which these defections happened is instructive because it illuminates the allied improvements already discussed. It also shows that a level of unity already existed between the Russians, Prussians, and Austrians at a time when they were still technically at war with Russia. The natural resentment Prussia and Austria felt toward France was further exacerbated by the presence of large numbers of ex-Prussian officers in the Tsar’s army.

The history of the defections themselves is relatively straightforward. On the southern front Schwarzenberg and the Austrian Corps failed to prevent the Russians under Admiral Tshitchagov from slipping past them and cutting Napoleon’s line of retreat at Borisov. The French later regarded this as a deliberate act of treachery, as Baron Marbot testifies in his memoirs.⁵ Although Vienna’s duplicity in this act was doubtful, Vienna had made a secret verbal agreement with Russia that promised limited participation by the Austrian corps in order to preserve it.⁶ The Russians even lodged a protest with Vienna at one point because Schwarzenberg had not “exercised the promised restraint.”⁷

Subsequent events, however, provided proof of Austria's real intent. Schwarzenberg *voluntarily* retreated without any pressure from the Russians on December 14, 1812. One week later he received confidential orders from Vienna to begin negotiations with the Russians to extricate his corps intact from the theater of operations.⁸ Eventually, the Russians and Austrians signed a formal convention on January 30, 1813 allowing Schwarzenberg to complete his retreat into Bohemia unmolested. The immediate effect of Schwarzenberg's actions was to neutralize 25,000 troops that Napoleon had formerly counted on.

The Prussian defection was far more dramatic and overt. Marshal Macdonald, on the northern flank, began his retreat as news of the disasters that had occurred to Napoleon's main army filtered in. His destination was East Prussia, which he could defend from behind the Niemen River. Two-thirds of his corps, nearly 17,000 Prussians under the command of General Hans David Yorck were positioned behind Macdonald's other troops during the retreat. The Prussians became separated from Macdonald on Christmas day 1812 when a Russian-Cossack brigade of cavalry commanded by a Prussian in the Tsar's service (General Diebitsch) interposed itself between Yorck and Macdonald.

It was no accident that an inveterate Franco-phobe like Yorck was in command of the Prussians. Napoleon tried to avoid this very situation. He hoped to ensure complete control over the Prussians by insisting on the appointment of the old and feeble General Grawert to this corps. However, the foresight and intelligence of the new Prussian military were now displayed in the way they countered Napoleon's design. The Prussian King, at the behest of Scharnhorst, appointed Yorck as second-in-command.⁹ Grawert soon stepped down, due to the rigors of the campaign, allowing Yorck to assume command. Yorck and Macdonald soon clashed and remained on very bad terms for the remainder of the campaign--a situation which Macdonald did nothing to alleviate.¹⁰

Personality also played a fortuitous role on the other side of the fence. Not only was Diebitsch a former Prussian soldier, but his chief of staff was none other than Yorck's partner in the reform of the light infantry of the Prussian army--Carl von Clausewitz. Clausewitz and Diebitsch had specific orders from the Tsar to "avoid treating the Prussians as decided enemies."¹¹

The Russians, in fact, had been attempting to "turn" Yorck for some time. A dialogue started in late summer between Yorck and his opponents over the exchange and treatment of prisoners soon developed into outright requests for Yorck's neutrality or cooperation. Yorck dutifully forwarded these communiqué's to Berlin for action.¹² When Diebitsch approached Yorck under a flag of truce, Yorck requested to speak with Clausewitz personally.¹³ The negotiating parties near Taurrogen on that Christmas day in 1812 were not just fellow countrymen but comrades-in-arms.

Over the next four days Clausewitz, Yorck, and Diebitsch negotiated while Macdonald remained oblivious to the danger of the situation. An agreement, soon to be known as the Convention of Taurrogen, was finally reached December 30, 1812. Yorck agreed to neutralize his troops for a period of two months. He also managed to get the Prussian cavalry that was with Macdonald's column to depart and join him. With one stroke another 17,000 troops departed from the forces available to the retreating French. Yorck then promptly sent one of his aides to Frederick William III with a copy of the convention and a letter explaining himself, "Heaven grant that it may lead to the welfare of our country."¹⁴

The defection of Yorck and his Prussians was no mere truce. It affected the formation of the coalition in three ways. The first and most immediate effect was that it created a power vacuum in East Prussia. Macdonald lost two thirds of his corps, which included his rear guard, and of necessity had to rapidly retreat to save what was left. Thus, there was no longer any meaningful force to dispute either the passage of the Nieman or a push to the west by the

Russians. A westward advance to liberate Germany was precisely the goal of Alexander's most influential advisors at this time, Nesselrode and Baron Stein. Stein was the same reformer that had been forced to flee Prussia when Napoleon noticed the danger posed by Stein's reforms to Imperial France. Under these men's influence, the Tsar overruled the cautious Kutusov and the advance continued.

The second effect of Taurrogen was as a catalyst. Clausewitz, who was instrumental in negotiation, articulates this best:

It were unreasonable to suppose that, but for the resolution adopted by General Yorck at Taurrogen, Buonaparte would still have been on the throne, and the French masters of Europe; for the great result to the contrary flowed from an endless variety of causes, or rather forces, most of which were independent of General Yorck: it is not, however, to be denied, that his resolution had enormous consequences, and probably materially accelerated the result.¹⁵

Finally, Taurrogen bought the coalition time. It caused the Russians to advance into Germany itself much sooner and quicker than they would have, thus advancing the starting line by miles and months for the contest with the army that Napoleon was busily rebuilding in France. It also caused an acceleration in the process of raising and organizing the Prussian-German populace to fight the French. The Steins and the Yorcks could now freely and openly organize the manpower that had been under strict French control since 1807. The fruits of the Prussian reforms were now harvested. Napoleon unwittingly helped the Prussians by allowing them to raise additional levies in anticipation of *defending* against the Russians should they invade Prussia. Prussia transformed herself in the space of three months from a second rate military power into a force to be reckoned with. Without Taurrogen and the Prussian reformers this would not have been possible.

When Frederick William III learned of Yorck's action, he quickly disavowed it and ordered his arrest--he still feared the power of the French. But the genie was out of the bottle and the Prussian Army continued to grow. Yorck threw off the cloak of neutrality January 13, 1812

when he appealed to his fellow Prussians in Konigsberg to revolt and join the Russians against the French, "What kinds of opinions are held in Berlin? Have men sunk so low that they will not dare break the chains of slavery that we have meekly borne for the past five years? *Now or never is the time* [italics mine] to regain liberty and honor...with bleeding heart I tear the bonds of obedience and wage war on my own."¹⁶ Much as in France twenty years earlier, passion ruled.

The Tsar took quick advantage of Taurrogen and dispatched Stein with a commission to organize East and West Prussia for war. Yorck had already mobilized the Krumper and the new line recruits called up by the King the previous December. Stein's contribution was a plan to raise an additional 20,000 troops as Landwehr. The King, heartened or goaded by these developments, maintained his mask of support for Napoleon while signing a royal decree on February 9, 1813, formally creating the Landwehr. There would be 80,000 Landwehr in action by April.

At this juncture the Sixth Coalition turned another fateful corner. Frederick William departed Berlin and joined the Tsar in Silesia. Under Stein's influence, the two Monarchs secretly ratified the on March 1, 1813 the "cornerstone of the final alliance against Napoleon"--the treaty of Kalisch.¹⁷ The terms of the treaty were: Prussia would be restored to the relative size she had been in 1806, the Russian and Prussian armies would cooperate to defeat Napoleon, and no peace would be made with Napoleon without common accord. Three days later Sweden, under the leadership of their Crown Prince the former Marshal Bernadotte, signed a treaty with Great Britain promising to put 30,000 troops into the field for the German campaign. Great Britain committed troops to the main theater, promising to send an additional 9,000 Anglo-German troops to serve under Bernadotte.

The allies were again signing separate treaties and not one document, but the circumstances were far different--the moment had to be taken advantage of. There was not time to meet and unify all the various agreements, Kalisch would have to do. As a result, Bernadotte

would effectively avoid combat in the spring of 1813, principally because he was not party to a broader document of alliance.

Before turning to the performance of the coalition in the field a final word on Austria is necessary. Her national goal remained the same--restoration of a Germanic system analogous to the recently departed Holy Roman Empire. The salient features of this system were: a weakened France as a foil to Prussia, a strong Prussia as a bulwark against Russia, and a Germanic Confederation built around Austria and Prussia with Austria as the dominant member. Austria's strategy to this end was as an armed mediator.

Austria's policy of armed mediation was a significant departure from her policy of years past. Until Austerlitz she had always operated as a member of a military coalition during these wars. Her subsequent military and financial weakness forced her to remain neutral and acquiescent during the Prussian debacle and imposition of the Continental System. In 1809, she felt strong enough to challenge the French without the encumbrance of a continental ally. Indeed, Metternich welcomed Russian neutrality in 1809.¹⁸ Her policy now reflected these experiences and she assumed a role far more suited to her diplomatic strength and still weak military--the neutral mediator pulling the strings behind the scenes.

In late March, Metternich's offer of armed mediation clarified the pretense of Austrian support that Napoleon clung to. The Franco-Austrian alliance was effectively terminated and Napoleon's strategic gaze was now distracted by the specter of Austria rearming to the south. Austria's role also significantly affected the strategic plans of the Allies. Vienna secretly kept the Allied high command abreast of her military preparedness. Additionally, an agreement had apparently been reached that committed the main armies of the Allies to operations along the southern axis through Saxony. Austria's purpose was to ensure contact between her forces and the Allies if her army entered the contest.¹⁹ To the Allies, Austria's participation was not a matter of

if, but when. What might be considered a constraint--operating to the south--had an ultimately beneficial effect in preventing the collapse of the Sixth Coalition in the late spring.

Austria also attempted to diplomatically isolate Napoleon by detaching his allies in the Confederation of the Rhine: particularly the kingdoms of Bavaria, Saxony, and Wurttemburg. Napoleon's amazing regeneration of the Grand Armee at his depots along the Rhine prevented Bavaria and Wurttemburg from responding. Austria did succeed, however, in soliciting Saxon neutrality, which was facilitated by the Blucher's occupation of the Saxon capital of Dresden on March 27. The loss of the Saxon army further reduced Napoleon's own military resources.,

Finally, Austria was buying herself time to properly rearm. The army Napoleon left her after 1809 was intended to prevent her from ever causing him any major problems again. After the Russian debacle, Austria also began to rearm under the pretense of meeting additional commitments to the French. However, Emperor Francis' military advisors informed him that the Army would be unable to mobilize to the strength required by the projected Austrian plan of operations until early August.

In retrospect, Austria played the neutrality game in 1813 far more effectively than Prussia had in the decade before Jena. As already discussed, she actually contributed to the military equation by forcing both Napoleon and the Allies to conduct the operations of their main armies in the south. More important, she bought herself time to organize her army for a strategic plan that was finalized as the hostilities of the spring campaign were concluding.

In the meantime, the campaign continued in Germany. It seemed as if the Russians and Prussians would win the race against time and reconquer most of Germany before Napoleon could act. One by one the great river barriers were breached and crossed: the Nieman, the Vistula, the Oder, and finally the Elbe. The strategy that propelled this advance was initially dictated by the

vacuum, already discussed, that existed after Yorck's defection. This strategy forced Napoleon to act before his forces were ready, particularly his decimated cavalry.²⁰

The coalition's high command, not surprisingly, soon fell to squabbling about the proper course of action. Kutusov, whose first choice was peace, wanted to concentrate force before advancing further. The Prussian strategy was to continue to advance to the Rhine while the French were weak. The proponent of the Prussian strategy was Blucher's chief of staff and chief of the Prussian General Staff General Scharnhorst. Scharnhorst counted on massive defections by the troops of the Confederation of the Rhine and, along with everyone else, underestimated the strength of the French. He reasoned that these factors combined with the high percentage of veterans in the Russian and Prussian armies would provide the margin needed to push the weak French conscripts back to the Rhine.²¹ This plan would also have the added benefit of cutting off thousands of veteran French troops in fortresses throughout Germany and Poland. Had it not been for Napoleon's organizational genius in creating a new Grand Armee, Scharnhorst's strategy would probably have worked. In any event, the part that cut off the French garrison troops worked extremely well.

The strategic dilemma was resolved in Scharnhorst's favor with the death of Kutusov, the most influential voice in opposition to a continued advance beyond the Elbe. Nevertheless, doubts about the offensive remained. The British liaison officer to the Allied Headquarters, Sir Charles Stewart, reported that "many names of eminence" (he does not provide any specifics) were adverse to continuing the offensive. Stewart's conclusion was that the decision was made for "political rather than military considerations" and that "the position of Saxony directly, and Austria remotely, must have influenced the councils of the allied Sovereigns."²²

The more aggressive General Wittgenstein now replaced Kutusov. Now, command and control problems further muddled the atmosphere at the Allied Headquarters. This was because

Wittgenstein was junior to two other Russian generals, Miloradovitch and Tormassov, who refused to serve under him. The Tsar solved, or sidestepped, this problem by combining Wittgenstein's troops (which included Yorck) with the southern forces under Blucher while leaving Miloradovitch and Tormassov with independent, corps-sized commands. Thus the Tsar became the de facto commander-in-chief of the coalition's armies since all three Russian generals took their orders from him.

In this manner the coalition continued the tradition of coalitions past--a muddled command and control structure that had at its apex one of the architects of Austerlitz--the Tsar. This unsatisfactory arrangement received a nasty jolt of reality when Wittgenstein, conducting a flank march in order to join Blucher, was attacked by Napoleon's stepson Eugene (now in command of the French forces) at Mockern on April 3. Fortunately for the Allies Eugene withdrew allowing them to claim victory and continue their concentration at Dresden.

Napoleon now assumed personal command of the new Grand Armee in order to avoid the loss of the defensive line of the Saale River, which in turn would lose him Saxony. The effect of the "Emperor of Battles" on the coalition with his raw new army was not at all certain. But any doubts about his talent to wage war were dispelled at the Battle of Lutzen (May 2, 1813). In this horrific encounter Napoleon may have lost as many as twice the number of many men as the Allies, but he recaptured the initiative. However, the coalition learned many valuable lessons from this battle that are worth noting.

First and foremost was the problematic command structure already discussed. At a crucial moment in the battle, Alexander had denied Wittgenstein the authority to commit the Russian guards and probably lost the opportunity to blunt the French attack and remain on the field. In the wake of the defeat, even Alexander must have begun to recognize the "inadequate system of high command."²³

Another unfortunate consequence of Lutzen was that Scharnhorst was wounded and would later die of blood poisoning. His replacement, General von Gneisenau, would later prove himself a worthy successor, but in the interim it was a heavy blow to the coalition. In modern parlance, Gneisenau took over without a proper passdown. This was because Scharnhorst, deliberate and methodical, had kept much of his information and strategic logic to himself and died before he could pass it on to his successor. Gneisenau's personality, decisive and impetuous, was also different and would soon prove a problem in his relations with the Russians.²⁴

On the positive side, the Allies had achieved a tactical surprise of the French and nearly obliterated Ney's corps prior to the arrival of French reinforcements. As the battle continued, Napoleon soon outnumbered the Allies by nearly 40,000 men, yet the Allies retired from the field in good order with most of their guns. The ferocity of Lutzen led to Napoleon's grudging acknowledgment that his opponents had indeed improved. "These animals have learned something," was his comment.²⁵ Napoleon's weakness in cavalry was admittedly a big reason for his lack of a complete success. Nevertheless, the outnumbered Allies had avoided destruction. This pattern would be repeated again some two weeks later at Bautzen with Napoleon enjoying an even greater numerical advantage while employing his trademark *maneuver sur la derriere*.

Finally, Lutzen once and for all demonstrated the value of Napoleon's personal presence on the field of battle. Napoleon had arrived to find Ney's broken and demoralized troops reeling back from the Allied assault. His mere presence and will were all that were needed to turn the tide of battle. The Allies could have no doubts as to what had happened when they found a stiffened French resistance accompanied by the audible cries of "Vive L'Empereur" from across the battlefield.

After Lutzen, the Saxons returned to their allegiance to Napoleon and again placed their army at his disposal. However Napoleon's increasing concern vis-a-vis the Austrians led to his

dispatch of Eugene to Italy to organize its defense. Napoleon could clearly see the sands slipping through the hourglass. So it was that Napoleon again sought solution in battle, at Bautzen near the Silesian frontier.

Bautzen (May 20-21) was a far more deliberate battle than Lutzen from the Allied standpoint, and it was very nearly a catastrophe. Whereas Lutzen was the result of an opportunity to destroy a perceived isolated French unit, Bautzen was a deliberate defensive action. Once again Napoleon achieved what should have been a decisive numerical superiority on the battlefield. And once again the muddled command and control structure, exemplified by Tsar Alexander's continual meddling in the tactical decision making of the battle, nearly obliterated the coalition army. Alexander's meddling was compounded by the failure of Wittgenstein to communicate to the high command the true strength of Barclay de Tolly's corps which was protecting the northern flank. When Barclay's corps reported that Ney's army would soon cut off the entire Allied force, the information was suppressed in order to avoid the humiliation of another retreat. General Gneisenau, with great moral courage, finally persuaded the Allies to retreat before it was too late.²⁶

The result of this near disaster was another command crisis within the Allied camp due to the resignation of Wittgenstein. Strategy again emerged as a divisive issue when Wittgenstein's replacement, Barclay de Tolly, quarreled with Gneisenau and Blucher over the proper course of action in the wake of the most recent defeat. This quarrel had its genesis in the serious doctrinal differences between the Prussian and Russian armies over the tactical employment of troops on the battlefield. The battles of Lutzen and Bautzen had convinced the Prussians that the Russian methods were inferior and they wanted more control over how their units were positioned on the battlefield. The chief complaints of the Prussians were: that the Russians did not take proper advantage of terrain, instead relying on the construction of fieldworks; that the Russians failed to

properly employ light troops; and that they grouped the larger formations of the Army into vulnerable masses instead of relying on mobility and proper use of terrain.²⁷ In other words the Prussians were criticizing the Russians for not fighting in the manner of the pre-1812 French.

The problem was also one of command and control. After Kutusov's death, the high command had relied on the Prussians for strategic direction. However, the tactical dispositions for the battles had been left to the general in chief, who had always been *Russian* up to this point. The Prussian commanders rebelled when Barclay assumed command because they insisted on complete autonomy over the positioning of their own contingents. Barclay responded by elevating the disagreement to a strategic level and advised Alexander that the Russian Army could not maintain itself in Germany and must retreat into Poland.²⁸

In response the Prussians proposed a retreat into the fortified position at Schweidnitz in Silesia. Now the role of Austria in the formation of strategy became critical. The Prussians feared that if they retreated into Poland with the Russians they would not only lose their richest province, but that they would lose any hope of Austria's military participation in the coalition (Austria had already sent a few weapons to Silesia to arm the Landwehr). Barclay had serious doubts that the Prussians could maintain their position in Silesia even with Russian help. With Baron Mueffling's assistance, Barclay personally visited the position at Schweidnitz and ascertained the state of the 20,000 Silesian Landwehr, in whom the Prussians had placed their hope for the future. The facts revealed that Schweidnitz was a "ruin" and the preponderance of the Landwehr were without firearms.²⁹ The Prussian strategy was a paper tiger.

At this point Barclay relayed to the Prussians that the only option was to accept an armistice that Napoleon offered in order to avoid the destruction of the coalition. The high command of the two nations concurred and negotiations for a truce began. Barclay never

executed his retreat to Poland because, as Mueffling stated in his memoirs, "This fortunately, was opposed to measures that had been concerted with Austria."³⁰

On the other side of the hill Napoleon was in just as dire straits and largely unaware of how dire the coalition's position really was. His massive losses in the two major battles and numerous minor ones were compounded by the relentless pace at which he drove his young conscripts. The result was an army that was practically disintegrating from desertion and physical exhaustion. His weak and ineffective cavalry once again had prevented him from following up his victory with an effective pursuit and acquiring the intelligence that may have led him to continue the fight.

Another factor affecting Napoleon's decision was the effectiveness of the Allied secondary forces: Cossacks, partisans, and freikorps. These forces caused serious interference along Napoleon's communications.³¹ The further east he pushed the Allies, the more pronounced this problem became as his lines of communication became more and more extended. Logistical support broke down as the Grand Armee entered Silesia due to the lengthened lines and the raiders.³² Napoleon was forced to divert more and more combat troops (mostly infantry) to guard his supply convoys and garrison storage depots. These detachments further weakened his already limited combat power.

Central Europe had not experienced guerrilla warfare on this scale for some time, but these operations were only too familiar to Napoleon's Spanish veterans. The coalition now fought a compound type of warfare; elemental, not incidental, to its strategy. The secondary forces also captured some geographically important cities in the course of the spring campaign. Two of the most notable examples were the capture of Hamburg and Leipzig. Hamburg was liberated by a raiding party under Tettenborn and required a concerted effort by Davout, assisted in no small measure by Bernadotte's fence straddling in Pomerania, to effect its recapture. The tying down of

Davout was a significant achievement because it prevented his support of Oudinot's drive on Berlin after Bautzen. In the same manner, against more resistance, the Russian General Woronzov captured Leipzig on June 7, three days after Napoleon had signed the Armistice of Pleischwitz.

Napoleon's reasons for signing this armistice, which suspended hostilities until July 20, 1813, are a telling comment on the influence of the Austrians on the situation. Napoleon wrote, "I decided on it for two reasons: my lack of cavalry which prevents me striking telling blows, and the *hostile position of Austria*" (italics mine).³³ Napoleon's concern was that Austria would enter the contest if he did not accept her mediation--when in fact, as discussed earlier, she was still not militarily prepared to go to war and never had the intention to go to war as early as June. The other coalition partners, despite the grumbling Woronzov who had to give back Leipzig, were also ready to rest and regroup.

In summary, the coalition had taken a beating and held together. True, the coalition had been tactically defeated. However, Napoleon's agreement to an armistice was a strategic victory for the Allies. Just how great a victory depended on how well the Allies used the respite given them by Napoleon.

The coalition had several experiences fresh on their collective mind as they adjourned for the armistice. Napoleon, personally leading the Grand Armee, had come very close to decisively beating them. Defeat caused the Prussian and Russian generals to become fractured over tactics and strategy. A strategic plan had to be found that could defeat Napoleon--one that everyone could at least live with if not actually embrace. The issue of fighting Napoleon in person would be important in the development of a unified strategic plan.

Command and doctrine were also issues that needed to be addressed in the execution of strategy. Had Napoleon not solicited an armistice the disunity caused by questions of command and strategy and differences in doctrine could have been fatal. The entire command structure

needed rework. The challenge, then, was to translate the unity provided by the common goal and the common enemy down to strategic plans. Once a strategy was adopted the plan must address command issues in a way that minimized dispute and maximized adherence and unity of effort.

Differences in national military doctrine presented another problem for the coalition. Doctrinal differences had developed into disputes. A similar dispute in 1799 contributed to the collapse of the Second Coalition. These disputes, in their turn, grew into disputes over command and strategy that detracted from the coalition's unity and cohesion. The chances of the Allies establishing a single coalition doctrine required a level of cooperation that did not exist in that day and age. However, the opportunity afforded by the armistice gave them the time needed to perhaps minimize doctrinal differences via a common strategic plan. For this reason, and the others listed above, the Allies scheduled a combined diplomatic and military conference to be held during the armistice in July at Trachenberg.

Finally, the Allies realized that Austria's military participation was critical--just the threat of Austria's hostility had forced Napoleon to the bargaining table. Ironically, Sweden's importance was magnified, rather than diminished, by Bernadotte's lack of activity during the spring campaign. The Allies, particularly the British and the Tsar, felt his leadership, combined with Sweden's military contribution would provide the margin in the northern theater.

Nevertheless, all eyes were on Austria. The biggest potential improvement to the coalition would Austria's participation. Austria's military capability increased with every day of the spring campaign. Maybe Austria could secure Napoleon's withdrawal from Germany without any further bloodshed. If not, Austria's Army would be ready, by her own calculations, with the advent of August. In the meantime there was much for the coalition to do, including raising and training the Prussian Landwehr, moving forward additional Russian reserves, and thoughtfully

planning and publishing a campaign plan if or when hostilities resumed. Napoleon's opposition had improved--now they would use the time he had given them to improve even more.

¹Carl von Clausewitz, *The Campaign of 1812 in Russia* (Hattiesburg, MS: Academic International, 1970), 240.

²Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 72.

³Riehn, 395-396.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Marbot, Baron de, *The Memoirs of Baron de Marbot*, trans. Arthur John Butler (London: Greenhill Books, 1988), 307.

⁶Kissinger, 24.

⁷Rothenberg, 177.

⁸Riehn, 397.

⁹Clausewitz, 225-226.

¹⁰Ibid, 217.

¹¹Ibid, 230.

¹²Peter Paret, *Yorck and the Prussian Era of Reform* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 192.

¹³Clausewitz, 231.

¹⁴Ibid., 241.

¹⁵Ibid., 251-252.

¹⁶Paret, 193.

¹⁷Gershoy, 503; Markham, 201.

¹⁸Rothenberg, 122.

¹⁹Mueffling, 30-54 *passim*.

²⁰General de Caulaincourt, *Memoirs of General de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza, 1812-13*, ed. Jean Hanoteau, trans. Hamish Miles (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1939), 620.

²¹Mueffling, 30-31.

²²Stewart, Charles William Vane, Marquess of Londonderry, *Narrative of the War in Germany and France in 1813 and 1814* (London: Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1830), 20.

²³Chandler, 887.

²⁴Mueffling, 32-34.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid, 33-35.

²⁸Ibid., 44.

²⁹Ibid., 45-54 *passim*.

³⁰Ibid., 44.

³¹Stewart, 53-54.

³²Bowden, 111.

³³Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

THE ARMISTICE AND FALL CAMPAIGN--FORMULA FOR VICTORY

Austria's diplomatic efforts combined with Russo-Prussian hard fighting bought the coalition much needed time. During the armistice the Sixth Coalition attended to those matters Napoleon's offensive had disrupted and delayed. These included diplomatically shoring up the coalition, equipping and training new troops, bringing up reserves (especially the Russians), and meeting together to agree on a campaign strategy. The campaign that followed tested the efficacy of these political and military improvements. In the campaign that followed the improvements the coalition made proved decisive and Napoleon was driven from Germany.

The Sixth Coalition consisted of two dimensions at the beginning of the armistice, one diplomatic and one military. The main members of the military part consisted of Russia and Prussia with Great Britain as their financier. The diplomatic portion added Austria and Sweden. However, the common goal for both dimensions was the same, the liberation of Germany. The activity during the armistice centered on achieving this aim diplomatically and preparing for its accomplishment militarily should diplomacy fail.

A substantial portion of the diplomatic effort would also be directed internally. The liberation of Germany meant different things to different countries. The one aspect that all parties could agree on was that the liberation of Germany meant the expulsion of French armies and influence. Accordingly, the leaders and their foreign ministers needed to further define their goal in concrete terms--terms that would exclude France and bring Austria into the war should they be rejected.

Austria, by definition in the terms of the armistice itself, assumed the diplomatic lead. She attempted the accomplishment of the common goal via statesmanship and negotiation on behalf of the coalition. In the process she committed herself to joining the coalition militarily should her efforts fail. While these efforts took place, the military side of the coalition prepared for achievement of the common goal with Austria's full participation.

The end product of the military and diplomatic efforts was improved unity of effort. The liberation of Germany provided unity of effort via a common, shared goal. Building on this foundation, the diplomatic effort provided political unity, principally via the Treaty of Reichenbach. Great Britain's contribution in this arena was also significant because of her subsidy treaties. These provided financial stability and equipment that supported the political unity.

The conference held at Trachenberg in July between representatives of all the nations produced a strategic plan that provided military unity. The plan addressed the goal by making the defeat of Napoleon's armies in Saxony its means for the liberation of Germany. The plan was flexible and allowed commanders to exercise considerable initiative as long as its basic tenets were *adhered* to. Because it allowed commanders considerable latitude its chances of being adhered to increased. Adherence meant unity in execution.

The Trachenberg Plan also attempted to unify by assigning command of the principal armies to each nationality. Only two commanders were specified in the written plan itself, Bernadotte and Bennigsen. Command arrangements after the convention generally improved unity, Blucher and Schwarzenberg commanding for Austria and Prussia in Silesia and Bohemia, respectively. However, the command of the main army in Bohemia became a source of disunity

once the Russian army under Barclay de Tolly united with it. Although Schwarzenberg was chosen as the supreme commander, both of the entire theater and of the combined armies in Bohemia, problems arose over the command in Bohemia.

The purely physical improvements to the coalition's armies complemented those accomplished via diplomacy and planning. The Prussian and Russian losses of the spring had been, for the most part, replaced. The troops, especially the Prussians, were far better equipped--with muskets instead of pikes.¹ Meanwhile, the Chief of the Austrian General Staff Radetzky carefully expanded and equipped the Austrian army during the period since its return from Russia. The coalition now had this army, not just a partner, but designated as the main army for the accomplishment of their goal.

As the campaign proceeded the greatest challenges to the integrity of the Sixth Coalition came from discord resulting from disputes over command relationships. This discord, in its turn, led to some minor setbacks and one major defeat--at Dresden. Napoleon's opponents demonstrated, as at Lutzen and Bautzen, that they were made of sterner stuff. They kept on fighting even after what would have constituted a decisive defeat in years past because of their unity and commitment to the achievement of their goal.

Schwarzenberg, as it turned out, was a good choice as supreme commander. He essentially left the conduct of the campaign by the Silesian and North German armies to the discretion of their commanders in adhering to the strategic plan. The command problem in Bohemia was never properly resolved and evolved into two separate armies that loosely cooperated within supporting distance of each other while adhering generally to the outline of the Trachenberg plan. Despite this handicap, the commitment of the coalition's leaders resulted in their adherence to the purpose of the strategic plan--to defeat Napoleon methodically as a team.

When Napoleon and his Russo-Prussian opponents agreed to the armistice, they surrendered the initiative--to Austria. It is ironic that Austria, not a formal member of the coalition, now became its most effective proponent. Napoleon recognized the danger inherent in trusting his fate to what Rothenberg has called his "great adversaries."² He actually tried to negotiate a separate peace with the Tsar in the weeks preceding the armistice, but had been referred to the mediation of Austria.³

The coalition nations' hope for Austria was to be greatly rewarded--but this did not lessen their worry. Sir Charles Stewart, the brother of the British Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh and plenipotentiary to the Allied headquarters, wrote, "It is difficult to give an adequate idea of the anxiety that prevailed at this eventful crisis with respect to the decision of Austria. The Allied armies had . . . abandoned their main lines of communication . . . placed themselves absolutely in a cul de sac; and Austria had not declared for them."⁴ Nevertheless, Metternich had written in late April to reassure the Tsar about Austria's positive intention to join the coalition when she was militarily ready. As discussed in the preceding chapter, this policy resulted in the coalition's decision to operate contiguous to Austrian territory. Although neither side had formally accepted the Austrian offer of mediation, the Tsar's actions prior to the armistice in rebuffing Napoleon's peace feelers reflected the coalition's implicit acceptance of Austria's role. Napoleon's agreement to the armistice also implied his acceptance, although formal French acceptance was still a month away.

Thus, the fate of the coalition depended on Austria. Metternich now proceeded to conduct a diplomatic blitzkrieg whose result would be the solution of the problem posed earlier--how to get Napoleon to reject peace terms while gaining Austria as a military member of the coalition. Metternich's offensive had the beneficial, and necessary, result of further defining the parameters of the common coalition goal--the liberation of Germany.

The various perceptions and positions of the Allies are critical to understanding Metternich's methodology in uniting and defining the Sixth Coalition with Austria as a member. First, certain members of the coalition had not signed the armistice and remained at war with France--Great Britain and Spain (just as Austria had not signed it and remained *at peace*). Also, the participation of Sweden and her arguably talented (at least militarily) Crown Prince was still in question. Sweden signed a treaty in April with the understanding it would be ratified in turn by the Prussians and Russians. This treaty committed 30,000 Swedish troops to the coalition. The treaty involved a recognition of Sweden's right to be compensated with Danish Norway in return for her participation in North Germany. Another treaty with Great Britain provided subsidies for the Swedish contingent. Both Prussia and Russia had refused to ratify the treaty pending the outcome of Denmark's decision. Great Britain and the Tsar placed great store in the contribution that Sweden and her Napoleonic ex-Marshall and Crown Prince might make in battling his old master.

To Metternich and the Austrians the importance of Sweden was inflated. Austria's real concern was that Great Britain's interests were addressed. Metternich understood, as did Castlereagh, that no lasting peace in Europe would occur without the elimination of the basic maritime conflict between Great Britain and France. He also understood, as did all the members of coalition, that the campaign could not continue without British financial support.

Metternich had three objectives. First, he needed to determine the acceptable coalition terms for a *preliminary* peace negotiation. Secondly, he had to reconcile these with Austria's own terms so that if Napoleon rejected them Francis would decide in favor of the coalition. Finally, he needed to present these terms to Napoleon in a way that ensured their rejection.⁵ The last objective implies that Metternich was convinced that war was inevitable, this may not have been the case--as Metternich's words at Dresden may show. However, Metternich's assurances to the

Tsar and the actions of Austria's generals and diplomats in preparing the way for war seem to argue otherwise. It is more likely that he was cleverly buying time for Austria to rearm.

Metternich's first action was within his own camp, the coalition. He needed to reconcile Austria's peace terms with those of the coalition. The initial Austrian peace terms had been delivered by Count Stadion to the Allied camp in May, before the armistice. They were: the return of Illyria to Austria, the territorial aggrandizement of Prussia via the dissolution of the Duchy of Warsaw, the reestablishment of France's eastern boundary along the Rhine, and the break up of the Confederation of the Rhine.⁶

Stewart, who was present, summed up the coalition response to these terms:

The allies were supposed to desire, first, aggrandizement for Austria and Prussia; secondly, the separation of the duchy of Warsaw from Saxony and France; thirdly, the dissolution of the Renish confederacy; fourthly, the reestablishment of the of dynasty in Spain; and fifthly the independence of Holland: while Austria, it was believed, would be satisfied with the three last stipulations.⁷

The difference between the Austrian initial terms and those of the coalition consisted of the Spanish condition, Dutch independence, which the displacement of France to the west of the Rhine implied, and the territorial restoration of Prussia to an acreage equivalent in size to that of 1806.

Metternich's solution to what may seem an impasse was to convince the Allies that only four conditions would be presented to Napoleon as the basis for a *preliminary* peace. These were: the return of Illyria, dissolution of Grand Duchy of Warsaw, Prussian enlargement (but not to the level of 1806), and the restoration of the independent status of the Hanse cities of Hamburg and Lubeck. If Napoleon accepted these terms he would only guarantee Austrian neutrality.

In the meantime, Great Britain, Russia, and Prussia--as insurance against Austria's neutrality--signed additional subsidy treaties on June 14 pledging no separate peace with France. If France accepted Austria's terms the Allies would refuse them due to "their adherence to the

understanding with Great Britain" and "the war would continue, although it would, from diminished means assume a more defensive shape."⁸ This equated to a declaration of the coalition's intention to continue their fight with or without Austria.

Metternich worked out the terms of his preliminary peace on June 18-19 in consultation with the Allies, principally the Tsar, who Frederick William trusted to represent Prussia's interests. Napoleon learned of this meeting and invited Metternich to Dresden for a similar round of talks. This offer now provided Metternich an opening to achieve another of his objectives, the estrangement of Napoleon. The climax occurred at the famous interview on June 26, 1813 between Napoleon and Metternich. During a long and tempestuous interview, Napoleon attempted to bully and insult Metternich into accepting Illyria only in exchange for continued Austrian neutrality. Metternich's final response was that acceptance of Austria's terms was essentially Napoleon's last chance for peace. Napoleon angrily dismissed the Austrian statesman. As Metternich suspected, for Napoleon to accept these terms "meant that Napoleon had ceased being Napoleon."⁹

Metternich now proceeded to Reichenbach, convinced that peace with Napoleon was impossible. At Reichenbach the Allies awaited the arrival of Metternich with Napoleon's response to his terms. They now achieved what they had so long sought: a commitment from Austria to go to war should Napoleon continue to refuse Austria's basic terms. On June 27, 1813 the secret convention of Reichenbach (Great Britain and Sweden were unaware of its contents) was signed between Austria, Russia, and Prussia. In it, Austria pledged to join the coalition if Napoleon did not accept the terms he had already rejected at Dresden. Dresden and Reichenbach were therefore the climax of Metternich's efforts.

The final objective, convincing the Austrian Emperor of the inevitability of war remained. Metternich used the pretense of a peace convention in Prague that Napoleon agreed to on June 30.

The lack of progress in the peace negotiations convinced Francis of Napoleon's intractability. Napoleon denied his emissary Caulaincourt the authority to accept Austria's initial terms, the ones listed in the Treaty of Reichenbach, on August 4. The Austrian Emperor declared war on his Corsican son-in-law on August 12.

The agreement with Napoleon also included an extension of the armistice to August 10. Metternich had assented to the extension without consulting the Allies. The Allies, particularly the Tsar, were disturbed by this development, and none of their agreements to date prevented them from resuming hostilities on the original deadline of July 20.¹⁰ However, the extension provided more time to prepare. Metternich knew, too, that the Austrian Army was not yet ready for war. The extension of the armistice allowed Schwarzenberg and Radetzky additional time to mobilize the full strength of the Austrian army, which the Emperor had only approved on June 14. The Austrian Landwehr wasn't called up until July 6.¹¹

Napoleon's decision to sign the extension was influenced by two factors. As with the coalition, it gave Napoleon more time to organize and improve his army. Also key to Napoleon's decision was bad news from Spain, which he had received the day following the Dresden meeting. Wellington had defeated Napoleon's brother, Joseph, at Vitoria in Spain. This victory essentially meant that Napoleon would soon lose Spain entirely and he dispatched Marshal Soult for the defense of the Pyrenees and southern France. Napoleon knew this news would further strengthen the Allies' resolve against him and he busily concerned himself with preparations for war. Napoleon's acceptance of the extension may be more evidence that he had lost his talent for the strategic coup d'oeil. In the final analysis, the Sixth Coalition gained more from the extension than Napoleon.

After the momentous climax at Dresden and its fruits of Reichenbach, the coalition turned its attention to military cooperation. A veritable "galaxy" of diplomats and leaders of the Sixth

Coalition descended from July 9-12 upon the castle of Trachenberg in Silesia to discuss how to “act in concert in the distribution of their forces” and “have a fixed general plan of operations.”¹² These included the Tsar, the King of Prussia, and the Crown Prince of Sweden. However, it is important to remember that it included mostly the political leaders and their *personal* military advisors. Radetzky, Gneisenau, Blucher, Schwarzenberg, and even Moreau, who the Tsar had persuaded to come from the United States, were not there--but their input was. The names of the generals who were actually there are not as well known: Lowenhielm (Swedish), Toll and Volkonsky (Russian), and Knesebeck (Prussian).¹³

According to Baron Mueffling, the meeting at Trachenberg resulted from the Tsar’s desire to resolve outstanding command and control issues revolving around the Crown Prince of Sweden, Jean-Batiste Bernadotte ex-Marshal of the French Empire.¹⁴ Bernadotte, it will be remembered, was still awaiting Prussian and Russian ratification of the treaty he had signed in April that guaranteed his country compensation in Norway at the expense Napoleon’s Danish ally. Bernadotte had been so disillusioned by events in May that he had threatened to withdraw from the coalition on June first (before he actually had joined).¹⁵ So the meeting at Trachenberg also served the purpose of shoring up this part of the coalition.

Bernadotte’s terms for participation now included a major command for himself of one of the coalition’s principal armies. In addition to the approximately 110, 000 Swedes, Prussians, Russians, British, and North German troops already under his command, Bernadotte’s demands included command over the army of Silesia commanded by Marshal Blucher. The command and control question was to have a major impact on the final form of the operations plan and may be one reason that Bernadotte has received credit for authorship of the entire plan.¹⁶

However, Bernadotte did not receive everything he asked for. His “demands were too great, and could not be conceded by the Sovereigns. They wished however to see him return

satisfied from Trachenberg . . . and admitted that *circumstances might* [italics mine] render it necessary for him also to take the command of . . . the Silesian army.”¹⁷ This compromise had a negative impact during the upcoming operations because it created an environment for conflict with Blucher over combined command of the armies.

The question open about command of the other Allied armies remained open. As already mentioned, the fiery Blucher with Gneisenau as his Chief of Staff would command the Russo-Prussian force that would be based in Silesia. This force, however, was to be the smallest of the three because nearly 100,000 of its troops, Russians and Prussians, were to accompany the Tsar of Russia and the King of Prussia to join the Austrian army in Bohemia. This led to another squabble of a far more serious nature over the command of the main army; what would today be called an army group.

Tsar Alexander had hoped for the appointment of the Archduke Charles as the commander of the main Austrian field army, and thus also serve as commander of the army group formed as the Russians and Prussians joined forces with the Austrians in Bohemia.¹⁸ In May, Francis and Metternich had appointed Prince Schwarzenberg as the Austrian commander-in-chief. Schwarzenberg had commanded the Austrian corps of the Grand Armee in Russia in 1812. The Tsar subsequently nominated himself as supreme commander of this huge army, which would number more than 200,000 troops. Metternich countered with the argument that the country with the preponderance of force should command the main army. On August 6, 1813 the issue came to a head. Metternich threatened to maintain Austrian neutrality should Alexander replace Schwarzenberg as supreme commander. The Tsar reluctantly acquiesced in this decision.¹⁹ As with the Swedish issue, command of the Army of Bohemia would raise its ugly head repeatedly during the upcoming campaign.

The choice of Schwarzenberg was to prove a wise one despite critics of his generalship. He had maintained a good reputation throughout the Napoleonic Wars and had earned the praise of the British envoy in Vienna as early as 1805 during the search for a new president of the Hofkriegsrat.²⁰ His handling of the Austrian Corps in the fall of 1812 had even earned the approval of Napoleon himself, who had recommended that Francis promote him to the rank of field marshal. It was Schwarzenberg who had recommended attaching major Russian and Prussian corps to the Austrian army to further improve unity of effort.²¹ Gordon Craig's evaluation of Schwarzenberg eloquently summarizes his suitability for a multinational coalition command:

The new supreme commander's talents were, to be sure, more diplomatic than strictly military, and it was probably a good thing that this was so. Like Dwight D. Eisenhower in another great coalition a hundred and thirty years later, his great gift was his ability, by patience and the arts of ingratiation, to hold together a military alliance which before Napoleon was finally defeated comprised fourteen members, and to persuade the quarreling monarchs and their field commanders to pay more than lip service to the alliance's strategical plan.²²

The coming campaign strained and tested Schwarzenberg's talent for maintaining harmony on a historic level. Fortunately, Schwarzenberg was ably assisted by his chief of staff Fieldmarschalleutnant Josef Radetzky. Radetzky had been the driving force behind the reforms in the Austrian Army and now enjoyed the rare opportunity in history of planning the operations of, and employing in the field, the force he had so carefully crafted.

So, not only did Austria command the most important army, she also provided the strategic plan that served as the blueprint for the entire campaign. When Radetzky saw his initial strategy, based on a successful advance to the Rhine, become obsolescent due to the sledge hammer blows of Napoleon, he immediately began work on a new plan to defeat the French. The general form of this plan could already be gleaned from the Russian experience, a campaign of attrition that concentrated on the flanks and avoided combat with Napoleon. Radetzky had shared

his plans with Scharnhorst and received the latter's blessing before his death.²³ Radetzky explained this plan to the British Envoy Sir Robert Wilson as a "system of defense combined with offensive operations on a small scale over a general offensive movement which might win much, but also might lose all."²⁴ Radetzky had presented this plan to General Toll in June 1813, who then presented it to the conference attendees at Trachenberg on July 12.

The substance of the plan involved three main armies (see Appendix I for the entire translated convention). The two larger armies, under Bernadotte and Schwarzenberg, would threaten Napoleon's flanks from the north and south. Blucher's smaller Silesian army would face Napoleon to the east and was specifically directed to "avoid committing itself except in the case of an extremely favorable situation."²⁵ Any two armies not engaged by the French main effort were to attack the French flank, rear, and lines of communications. Contrary to some interpretations of this plan, it never directed retreat from Napoleon.²⁶ Rather it directed "vigorous offensive" through Napoleon's rear by the *unengaged* armies "to join battle." The culmination of these efforts was to be a "rendezvous in the camp of the enemy" of all three armies.²⁷ These prophetic words were the prescription that led to Leipzig.

There were other inputs that did not make it into the actual plan itself, but effected the strategic execution as well. Most of these had the effect of reinforcing the strategy chosen. Moreau, for example, advised the Tsar: "Expect a defeat whenever the Emperor attacks in person. Attack and fight his lieutenants whenever you can. Once they are beaten, assemble all your forces against Napoleon and give him no respite."²⁸ This was a course of action already implied by the plan. Jomini, too, just recently come over from the French camp, advised caution in dealing with Napoleon--stating that he was still "the ablest of men."²⁹ This advice also conformed with the plan.

The gains made by the coalition during the armistice were considerable. The hope was that they would outweigh those made by Napoleon. Diplomatically, Metternich had isolated Napoleon. He had also manipulated his own Emperor into joining the coalition. Militarily, the coalition had adopted the Austrian strategic plan to achieve the great goal--the liberation of Germany. Napoleon would not be allowed to fight on his own terms. A major battle would not be fought until all the armies could support each other. Only the "case of an extremely favorable situation" would allow otherwise.

Command of the Bohemian force went to the country that had the preponderance of force, authored the plan, and assumed the lead of the Sixth Coalition--Austria. Despite the apparent resolution of the command and control structure in early August, it contained seeds of discord that would soon sprout up: the Tsar's reluctant acceptance of Schwarzenberg as commander in chief and Bernadotte's belief that Blucher would be subordinate to his orders.

For these reasons unity was less than perfect as hostilities began. Despite the enthusiasm of the member nations, deep suspicions remained even after Austria declared war. Sir Robert Wilson and Sir Charles Stewart both distrusted Austria's dedication to the cause.³⁰ Additionally, the Prussians and British distrusted Bernadotte's motives. Mueffling, now the quartermaster General under Gneisenau, goes so far as to state that the Prussian and Russian Generals "were equally wounded by the intelligence that they had not the credit of being able to defeat Napoleon, but that Frenchmen had been chosen for this object."³¹ These resentments, added to the Austrian and Russian tensions over command, lessened the effectiveness of the coalition.

Finally, the equipping and training of the troops and armies of the coalition during the armistice, and the not inconsiderable advantage of getting a ten week rest for the veterans, yielded an immense force for the coming campaign. The Army of Bohemia passed in review on August 19 outside Prague for the monarchs of Austria, Prussia, and Russia. The British observers, whose

government's money had largely paid for much of what was on display, noted that the funds had been well spent and were completely satisfied with the state of the soldiers and equipment.³² In central Europe alone the coalition would oppose the approximately 410,000 troops of the reconstituted Grande Armee with over 570,000.³³ This disparity is even greater given the more than 50,000 veteran French troops cut off in fortresses by lesser numbers of second line coalition forces.

Napoleon's Grand Armee of August 1813 was certainly a much more potent force than the one he had victoriously marched and fought to exhaustion in the spring. His Imperial Guard and cavalry had been reconstituted by extraordinary efforts, especially by the expedient of denuding the armies in Spain. Napoleon's artillery, as could be expected of the artillery cadet of Brienne, was also numerous and excellent--but not nearly as mobile. However, his army remained overwhelmingly young--two-thirds of his troops were aged between 18 and 20. Ninety thousand of these troops would be on the sick list before hostilities even began.³⁴ The many foreign troops, especially Germans, in this army exacerbated these factors because many of the Grand Armee's veterans were now not French. Napoleon compounded this problem by apportioning the majority of these questionable troops, Saxons, Bavarians, Westphalians, and Wurttemburgers, to his flank forces. These forces predominantly opposed fellow Germans instead of the more ethnically diverse force of the Bohemian army. Finally, Napoleon was forced by circumstance to employ the best of his remaining independent commanders elsewhere: Eugene in Italy, Soult and Suchet in Spain, and Davout holding the lower Elbe.

And so the Fall campaign in Germany began. The great goal of liberation was never in doubt. Too, the Allies executed in general the "convention" signed at Trachenberg; they adhered to the spirit if not the letter of the document. The coalition's leaders had centrally planned at Trachenberg to overcome the difficulty of communication over the vast theater that spread around

Napoleon's salient in Saxony. Only decentralized execution by the three essentially independent armies, following the general guidelines provided, overcame this constraint. Indeed, decentralized execution contributed in large measure to their success.

The details of this execution, and Napoleon's responses, quickly brought to the fore the problems of command and control just below the surface of the general euphoria. Almost immediately after the armistice ended, Alexander reasserted his claim to command the Army of Bohemia. He now felt he had sufficient resources of military talent, Moreau and Jomini, to reassert his claim. Stewart reports that Moreau and Jomini were the source of Alexander's new resolve.³⁵ Moreau further alienated everyone but Alexander by his refusal to work for or command "foreigners," evidently a result of Alexander suggesting he "assist" Schwarzenberg.³⁶ Alexander's ineptitude in not recognizing the distaste an Austrian would have for a partnership with Moreau, the victor of Hohenlinden, is subtly captured by Stewart: "the arrival of Moreau created discontent amongst the Austrians and was perhaps the principal reason why the command in chief was not offered to Emperor Alexander."

Shortly thereafter Schwarzenberg organized and held the great review outside Prague in an effort to restore harmony to the coalition. The harmony produced only lasted a short time; shattered at the first council of war (there would ultimately be *seventeen*). The dispute between the Tsar and Schwarzenberg over command transitioned into dispute over strategy. Napoleon's apparent inaction since the end of the armistice now caused the Allies to reconsider at their plan. It had not allowed for an inert defense by their opponent, but anticipated a move on his part in order to react with the armies not opposed to him. A "general offensive" movement, contrary to Schwarzenberg and Radetzky's desires was agreed to by the council. Schwarzenberg had set up the logistics for the Austrian Army to support an eventual advance on Leipzig, and now that an

offensive was to be conducted he naturally recommended Leipzig as the objective. Orders were sent and the Army of Bohemia began to advance.

Once again the Tsar, advised by Moreau, interfered with the military commander. Alexander and Moreau felt a move closer to Blucher in Silesia warranted, indeed that was where Napoleon had gone in response to an advance by the Prussian firebrand. The Tsar's view's prevailed, despite the opposition of Schwarzenberg, and Dresden was chosen as the new objective. Schwarzenberg had considered moving on Dresden as well but had wanted to take advantage of his logistics preparations and wheel on the city after advancing through the Bohemian mountains. Metternich, responding to Schwarzenberg's consternation over these events, wrote, "the most sincere understanding between us and our allies is so important that we cannot offer *too great a sacrifice*"(italics mine).³⁷

The crisis of command and purpose now translated itself to the tactical level. Logistic support, set up for Leipzig, soon broke down in the advance to Dresden. The effects of countermarching and the wet, rainy weather further fatigued and slowed the advance of the Allies. The lead elements of the Army of Bohemia arrived south of Dresden on August 25; cold, tired, wet, and hungry. Napoleon was not yet there. Instead of attacking while Napoleon was still absent, another war council was held by the "military college" accompanying the army.³⁸ Schwarzenberg and Jomini supported the Tsar's desire for an immediate attack, but Moreau and Toll advised against it.³⁹ The attack was eventually put off until the next day, when discussion as to its merit resumed while the troops formed up for battle.

Marshal Gouvion St. Cyr opposed the Allies at Dresden. He had earned his Marshal's baton in Russia at Polotsk fighting just the type of battle the Allies now contemplated. The Allied skirmishers had already found Dresden's walled houses and gardens well fortified in response to their threatened assault. It was at this point that St. Cyr's master dramatically arrived. Once

Napoleon's arrival became known the mood at headquarters rapidly changed and Alexander now favored a withdrawal. The Prussian King, for the first time, asserted himself and called for the attack to continue--in contravention to the Trachenberg plan. While the supreme command bickered, the assault began based on the orders already issued. This decided the issue and the battle now commenced in earnest.

The result was a defeat for the coalition. Already half-beaten, the Allies compounded their mistake and fought until forced to withdraw on August 27. Their losses were, even by Napoleonic standards, stupendous. Some 38,000 Austrians, Prussians, and Russians were casualties, including many prisoners.

Dresden was the exception that proved the rule. The Trachenberg plan had never intended an offensive battle against Napoleon and his main army by a single coalition Army--particularly when Napoleon occupied such a strong defensive position as Dresden. The allied leaders, partially as a result of the ponderous command process of the Bohemian Army, diverted in spirit from the agreed plan, and fought Napoleon personally.

The Allies knew they had erred. Moreau, whose legs were shot off by a cannonball that just missed the Tsar, wrote his wife an assessment with his dying hand, "That scoundrel Bonaparte is always fortunate . . . Though the army has made a retrograde movement, it is not at all the consequence of defeat, but from want of *ensemble* [italics mine], and in order to get nearer General Blucher."⁴⁰ Wilson, who was also there and led several cavalry charges, was less charitable in his assessment; he called the battle "an ill-advised enterprise executed with great vigour."⁴¹

From the French side of the fence, Dresden seemed to justify the improvements Napoleon made during the armistice. His Young Guard had resolutely defended the city on August 26 and his cavalry and horse artillery had been critical in the counteroffensive that forced the Allied

withdrawal the following day. However, Marmont had expressed to Napoleon his concern about fighting on such a widely extended front with the prophetic words, "I greatly fear lest on the day on which Your Majesty gains a great victory, and believes you have won a decisive battle, you may learn you have lost two."⁴² These concerns were about to literally come true.

Meanwhile, the overall strategy paid handsome dividends on the northern and eastern fronts as the main coalition army bickered and stumbled to defeat at Dresden. Initially this seemed not to be the case. Marshal Oudinot, the leader of the army opposed to Bernadotte, gained some minor victories and advanced quickly on Berlin in accordance with Napoleon's instructions. Davout's advance in the west from Hamburg also met with success in the initial skirmishes. Bernadotte's reaction was typical of a sovereign whose chief concern was the preservation of his army (for the conquest of Norway)--he fell back with the intention of leaving Berlin to Oudinot. Bulow, the commander of his Prussian Corps, refused to abandon Berlin. Five days before Dresden, Bulow attacked the isolated Saxon Corps of Reynier at Grossbeeren on August 23 and routed it. Oudinot's entire army was forced to fall back as a result. The domino effect also extended to Davout, now exposed by Oudinot's retreat, and he withdrew to Hamburg.

In Silesia, Blucher's general adherence to the overall plan also led to victory on a much larger scale. As in the North, command and control between the nominal commander and his subordinates caused initial problems. The situation with Blucher's army was the reverse of that in Bernadotte's--it was the subordinate, the Russian General Langeron, who was the more cautious. Blucher was under the nominal command and control of Barclay de Tolly, who had been delegated the responsibility of coordinating the movement of the Army of Silesia with respect to the Army of Bohemia by Schwarzenberg.

Barclay and Blucher met before the end of the armistice to ensure the proper coordination and understanding prior to the Russian's departure for the Bohemian army in Prague. Blucher

proposed a more aggressive role for his army that involved attacking the French if Napoleon was not present and if the French had not attacked first. This course of action, implied but not stated in the Trachenberg plan, was approved by Barclay. However Barclay neglected to inform Langeron, commander of one of Blucher's Russian Corps, of this change. As a result, Blucher's advance against the French was robbed of its success when Langeron refused to cooperate in an effort to cut off an isolated corps under Ney near the Bober River.

Meanwhile, Napoleon had arrived with considerable reserves to confront Blucher's advance. Blucher, greatly outnumbered, fell back to a previously prepared defensive position according to plan. Again, Langeron undermined Blucher's plans by falling back beyond the prepared position, causing Blucher to retreat as well. Almost 5,000 men were lost as a result of these misdirected actions, but Blucher denied Napoleon a major battle.

The broad mechanism of Trachenberg now influenced what seemed a forlorn situation in Silesia. The Bohemian Army's lumbering advance on Dresden pulled Napoleon and his reserves away to assist St. Cyr. Napoleon left Marshal Macdonald in command with strict orders not to advance beyond the Katzbach River. Now it was the French turn for generals to disobey their commander. Macdonald pursued Blucher's now dispirited Russians and Prussians to the Katzbach. He proceeded to cross that river on August 26 and continue the pursuit.

Blucher and Gneisenau, now aware that Napoleon was no longer in charge, attacked Macdonald's force in a driving rain that had swollen the easily fordable Katzbach into a major obstacle. Blucher had also waited until about half of Macdonald's army was across. The portion of Macdonald's army on the Prussian side of the river was totally defeated and thrown into the river. Many French drowned in the crossing. Macdonald lost over 15,000 men and many cannon. Far worse was the disintegration of his army as Blucher followed up his victory with a relentless

pursuit by his very strong (almost 20,000) cavalry. Only the return of Napoleon (with reinforcements) from Dresden restored this force to a condition where it could turn and fight.

The battles on the Katzbach and at Grossbeeren had validated the strategic plan, despite the serious setback at Dresden. Besides, Dresden was a deviation from the plan. Local disunity in both of the smaller armies had threatened failure: Bulow's clash with Bernadotte and Langeron's insubordination with Blucher. Nevertheless, overall unity via general adherence by Bulow and Blucher to the overall plan had yielded two significant victories that effectively negated the results of Dresden. The Prussians had come into their own and their impetuosity now worked to the advantage of the Sixth Coalition.

More victories soon followed. Despite the pounding at Dresden, the army of Bohemia conducted a fighting withdrawal through the mountains of the Bohemian Forest. Partly due to tenacity, and partly due to luck, a victory was finally obtained for this army, too. This victory, at Kulm, was gained despite the ongoing feud between Schwarzenberg and the Tsar.

After Dresden, Schwarzenberg complained bitterly to Metternich and wrote that either the Russian and Prussian corps be placed "under my immediate orders, or someone else be entrusted with the command."⁴³ While Schwarzenberg entrusted his frustration to paper, he and Radetzky resolved to halt the French pursuit by General Vandamme that was threatening to cut off the entire army. On August 29, at Preisten, he turned and fought, sacrificing the Russian Guards in a vicious counterattack that halted Vandamme for the moment. Luck now favored the Bohemian Army. The next day, while Vandamme renewed his assault on the Austrian and Russian position, Kleist's Prussian Corps, which had been lost in the mountains, unexpectedly debouched on Vandamme's rear at Kulm. Vandamme was captured and more than half his Corps destroyed.

Meanwhile, Bernadotte, encouraged by Bulow's victory, cautiously advanced toward the Elbe on Napoleon's northern flank. Napoleon would have preferred to face his former Marshal

personally, but had to rescue Macdonald in Silesia. Accordingly, he replaced Oudinot with the more aggressive Marshal Ney. Ney immediately resumed the offensive against Bernadotte's victorious troops. On September 6, Ney stumbled into a trap that Bernadotte had laid for him north of the Elbe at Dennewitz. The fighting followed a characteristic pattern: furious Prussian and Russian attacks with Bernadotte holding his precious Swedes in reserve. Nonetheless, Bernadotte won the battle.

The performance of Napoleon's German Allies was a very disturbing element of this battle. Reynier's Saxon Corps, the same one mauled at Grossbeeren, broke early and contributed to the collapse of his entire army. The Bavarian contingent fought their last major battle at Dennewitz. The Bavarian King had been wavering, but finally gave in to the agents of the coalition as defeat followed defeat. On September 25 he secretly ordered his troops to cease cooperating with the French and withdraw if they could. Worse yet, the Saxons became more and more unreliable as Bernadotte, their old commander from wars past, infiltrated their ranks with agitators and propaganda, causing desertions by entire battalions.⁴⁴ Time was truly running out for Napoleon.

To understand Napoleon's problem further one need only follow his movements in September. In early September he moved from Dresden east to Macdonald's army to attack the advancing Blucher. Blucher responded by conducting a fighting withdrawal, correctly guessing that Napoleon was now with Macdonald's army. Napoleon then proceeded back to Dresden in response to St. Cyr's renewed call for help against the Army of Bohemia, again advancing after having recovered and reorganized. The command and control situation in the Bohemian army had further deteriorated to the point where the army had effectively split into two separate maneuver commands, one under Schwarzenberg and one under Alexander and his advisors. However, their response to a renewed offensive from Dresden by Napoleon accorded with the established

procedure--they *separately* withdrew. Napoleon considered attacking Alexander's column, which was just out of supporting range from the Austrians, but he was again called to other fronts to put out the fires that reignited in his absence.

It was the news of Dennewitz that pulled him away. Before he could deal with Bernadotte, he learned that Schwarzenberg was advancing again this time to Pirna--and rushed there to contain the threat. He again stabilized the situation only to learn of a renewed advance by Bernadotte to the Elbe. While he rushed north to deal with this problem he was further diverted to the east to again deal with Blucher. On September 22 he repulsed Blucher's forces in the vicinity of Bautzen, but again Blucher reverted to a defensive withdrawal.

In this manner the coalition prevented Napoleon from regaining the initiative. Most of Napoleon's comings and goings included a corresponding movement of portions of his reserves. All this marching and countermarching had the result of another defeat on the strength of the Grand Armee as thousands of Napoleon's young conscripts dropped out of ranks. Hunger also became a huge problem as the rapidly shifting moves outstripped Napoleon's careful logistics arrangements.

The Allies were intimately well-informed of Napoleon's deteriorating situation. Vital intelligence was provided on the Grand Armee's dispositions, intentions, and morale by the roving Allied cavalry and raiding corps. Wilson referred to this lucrative information source as "an infinity of intercepted official and private letters."⁴⁵ As in the spring campaign, these corps wrought havoc on Napoleon's communications, causing him to detach major formations from even the Guard Cavalry to deal with them.⁴⁶

The time was ripe for an audacious move. Schwarzenberg requested Blucher join him for a concerted drive on Leipzig. Blucher countered by recommending a flank march to unite with Bernadotte. With "extraordinary flexibility" Schwarzenberg endorsed Blucher's course of

action.⁴⁷ In a rare spirit of cooperation, Blucher and Bernadotte both proceeded to force the line of Elbe on the same day--and to force Napoleon's hand. Bernadotte established a bridgehead at Rosslau on October 3. Blucher's advance guard under Yorck defeated a part of Marmont's corps at Wartenberg further upstream and also crossed.

Napoleon's response was swift. He marched on Blucher with the mass of his army, 150,000 men, leaving St. Cyr to hold Dresden with 20,000. This move exposed the instability of the relationship between Bernadotte and Blucher and also the general problem of synchronizing the movements of these massive armies. Blucher had counted on Schwarzenberg to resume his offensive to distract Napoleon and counted on Bernadotte for support. The sluggish Army of Bohemia had scarcely moved. Worse yet, when Bernadotte learned of Napoleon's approach, he pulled back, out of supporting distance of Blucher. As at Kulm, another stroke of luck, supported by excellent Prussian staff work, helped the Allies and prevented Blucher's demise. Blucher, taking a page from Napoleon's play book, abandoned his line of communications with Berlin and barely dodged Napoleon's counterstroke on October 9 by moving to the west.

The stage was now set for the climatic battle of Leipzig. While Napoleon attempted to trap Blucher, Schwarzenberg executed the plan he had been thwarted from in August by the Tsar--he advanced on Leipzig. The arrival of Bennigsen's Army of Poland had emboldened the high command in Bohemia. As the main army advanced, they received the further good news on October 8 that the King of Bavaria had switched sides. The coalition had additionally strengthened itself diplomatically in mid-September, when the Monarchs of Austria, Russia, and Prussia had formalized the war aims of Reichenbach by a series of bilateral treaties at Teplitz (September 9). Napoleon lost the equivalent of 50,000 men with the defection of Bavaria and now realized that the 20,000 with St. Cyr in Dresden were probably lost as well. Nevertheless he

concentrated his forces at Leipzig for the final battle--perhaps he could smash the Austrians before Blucher and Bernadotte arrived.

The Battle of Leipzig was, in many ways, a microcosm of the entire fall campaign. All the elements are there on a tactical level. Blucher's aggressive offensive into the northern suburbs on October 16. Bernadotte's belated advance that avoided combat the first two days of the battle. Schwarzenberg and the Tsar clashed over when and where to fight, finally fighting almost two distinct battles on either side of the Pleisse river, neither achieving success. The similarities were not accidental. The Allies just kept doing what they had done all along, and probably missed a chance to destroy Napoleon completely.

However, while Schwarzenberg's mass engaged the bulk of Napoleon's force in the south and east, Blucher's efforts in the north sealed the tactical victory by denying Napoleon the resources he needed to exploit his local successes. The Army of Bohemia was thrown back, but it did not retreat. A relative lull in the battle occurred on the 17th--analogous to the period of relative inactivity in September after Dennewitz. The Allies were content to bring up their reserves--the fresh armies of Bennigsen and Bernadotte. With the arrival of these forces Napoleon realized he was now just buying time to secure his retreat.

As in the campaign, at Kulm and against Blucher, luck deserted Napoleon. After a hard day's fighting on October 18 that saw the French line constrict but not break, Napoleon began a well-ordered retreat from Leipzig. At midday on October 19 the only bridge over the Elster River leading out of Leipzig to the west was prematurely blown-up, cutting off three entire corps of Napoleon's army. This disaster converted the tactical victory of the coalition into a strategic victory. Napoleon's retreat would not end in Germany, but in France. The coalition accomplished its goal--Germany was liberated.

In summary, the four principles were each addressed during the armistice and subsequent campaign in a positive manner. Metternich had diplomatically resolved issues with respect to the common goal, via the terms he offered Napoleon for a preliminary peace. In so doing he further enhanced the coalition's unity of effort, by treaties at Reichenbach during the armistice and Teplitz during the campaign. The meeting at Trachenberg, conducted for exactly the reason of improving cooperation and harmony produced a strategic plan for the entire membership of the coalition in one short document. This plan provided the essential military unity of effort. Adherence to this plan during the campaign was generally good. It had the effect of minimizing the negative aspects resulting from friction and fog in war; enabling success, and minimizing setbacks as long as the coalition's commanders remained true to it.

The nations of the Sixth Coalition had used the period of the armistice to far better purpose than Napoleon. Metternich masterfully used diplomacy as an extension, certainly an integral part, of the war against Napoleon. While he undermined Napoleon's goals, he enhanced the commitment of his own coalition to their goals. The armistice need not have ended in war, but Metternich's diplomacy assured that his country and his coalition partners would be well served if war broke out.

The various treaties, especially at Reichenbach, reflected the fruits of the diplomatic efforts. Reichenbach constituted the diplomatic coffin of Napoleon. With a stroke of the pen it committed Austria, at last, to the coalition. It also further clarified and reconciled the common goal of the coalition into concrete terms that reflected the interests of individual nations. The subsidy treaties and the treaties signed at Teplitz were the final nails of resolution in Napoleon's coffin. Despite all the bickering that developed during the campaign itself, these treaties testify to *the strengthening* political resolve of the coalition nations to achieve their goal.

Just as diplomacy provided political unity, the strategic plan--embodied by the Trachenberg Convention--served as a rallying point for military unity and success. It was flexible and simple. These characteristics virtually guaranteed that it would be adhered to. Once the allied commanders accepted the principle of refusing decisive engagement with Napoleon himself until all the armies were united, the plan became acceptable and executable in its entirety.

The Trachenberg strategy also enabled decentralized execution vital to success in that primitive age of communications for the independent operations of several armies on a broad front. Its guidelines were understood to mean different things by different commanders--caution for Bernadotte versus aggressiveness for Blucher. But in its general form, except at Dresden, it was adhered to. The other admirable quality of the plan was the built-in unity it provided by ensuring that each army was a multinational force. True, this feature initially caused problems between differing nationalities (for example Blucher and Langeron), but its advantages outweighed its disadvantages. As the contest continued, the national contingents not only supported each other but actually competed on the field, much as the Grand Armee sometimes did, in trying to outperform each other.

Also noteworthy were the decisions implied in the Trachenberg convention, but not specified in it. These decisions involved the selection of the commanders for the armies of Silesia and Bohemia. In each case, over the long haul of the campaign, the coalition was well served by Schwarzenberg, Blucher, and even Bernadotte.

Schwarzenberg, ably supported by Radetzky, Metternich, and even his Emperor remained in command despite his responsibilities and all the annoyances. He captured these difficulties in a letter to his wife written shortly after the campaign began, "it is really inhuman what I must tolerate and bear, surrounded as I am by feeble-minded persons, eccentric projectors, intriguers, asses, babbler, and niggling critics."⁴⁸ Nevertheless he tolerated and prevailed. His cautious but

constant pressure on Napoleon's flank with the most powerful allied army had enabled the success of the other two. Wilson, writing after the fact in his diary, observed that the cause would have suffered disaster had Schwarzenberg not retained his command.⁴⁹

Blucher prevailed precisely because he ignored Bernadotte's authority and operated independently. In hindsight, the choice of Blucher complemented that of Bernadotte. Blucher's aggressiveness, backed by the able staff work of Gneisenau, counterbalanced the caution of Bernadotte. Bernadotte, too, contributed greatly to the cause with his victory at Dennewitz. The Army of the North had prevailed both despite and because of its cautious and parochial commander.

Although unity of effort had suffered from all the diverse quarrels, the overall unity to the cause was well served. Blucher's adherence to the guidelines of Trachenberg, faithfully withdrawing every time he faced Napoleon personally, provides the best example of the unity imposed by the plan. Schwarzenberg's ability to adapt to changes in his plans, and those of others, for the sake of coalition harmony also enhanced the overall unity.

The Sixth Coalition improved during the armistice, politically and militarily. These improvements were the result of a common goal and purpose in liberating Germany. Unity at the outset led to a unified strategic plan at Trachenberg. Prior planning provided military unity and essentially minimized the command and control problems through the mechanism of decentralized execution. The plan provided unity of command and promoted adherence in execution because the plan was the general in chief. The coalition generals, therefore, found a plan much easier to adhere to and execute than orders from a distant, and perhaps foreign, commander. The coalition used its plan as a strategic compass; denying Napoleon the initiative and wearing him down until his army literally ran out of time and room to maneuver.

¹Sir Robert Wilson, *Private Diary of General Sir Robert Wilson*, Vol II (London: John Murray, 1861), 62.

²Rothenberg, title page.

³Stewart, 53.

⁴Ibid., 54-55.

⁵Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 73.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Stewart, 58.

⁸Ibid., 59.

⁹Kissinger, 74.

¹⁰Alan Palmer, *Alexander I, Tsar of War and Peace* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 269.

¹¹Rothenberg, 179.

¹²Mueffling, 55.

¹³Scott, 84.

¹⁴Mueffling, 55-56.

¹⁵Scott, 73.

¹⁶Ibid., 87.

¹⁷Mueffling, 56.

¹⁸Rothenberg, 180.

¹⁹Palmer, 271.

²⁰Rothenberg, 79.

²¹Albert Sidney Britt, III, *The Wars of Napoleon* (West Point, New York: United States Military Academy, 1973), 198.

²²Craig, 5.

²³Britt, 198.

²⁴Wilson, .

²⁵Stewart, 372-373. See also Appendix II.

²⁶Chandler, 901.

²⁷Stewart, 373.

²⁸Markham, 206.

²⁹Wilson, 85.

³⁰Stewart, 98; Wilson, 76.

³¹Mueffling, 56.

³²Stewart, 106; Wilson, 84.

³³Rothenberg, 180.

³⁴Peter Hofschroer, *The Battle of the Nations* (London: Reed International Books, 1993), 16.

³⁵Stewart, 102.

³⁶Stewart, 100. Wilson, 77.

³⁷Britt, 206.

³⁸Wilson, 104.

³⁹Britt, 207; Wilson, 91.

⁴⁰Jean V. Moreau, *Memoirs of General Moreau*, ed. and trans. John Philippart, Esq. (London: A. J. Valpy, Tookes Court, 1814), 232.

⁴¹Wilson, 100.

⁴²Chandler, 903.

⁴³Britt, 208.

⁴⁴Scott, 102.

⁴⁵Wilson, 125.

⁴⁶Chandler, 915.

⁴⁷Britt, 212.

⁴⁸Rothenberg, 180.

⁴⁹Wilson, 134.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The study of coalition warfare is important because the U.S. military, by doctrine, operates within the context of coalitions beyond the shores of the nation. The United States is usually the leader of any coalition it builds or joins. Therefore, the study of other historical coalitions offers insight and wisdom--especially for a nation whose current modus operandi is almost exclusively within the context of a coalition.

Napoleonic coalition warfare is a useful subject period because it covers a lengthy period in history where coalition warfare was the norm--much as coalition warfare is the norm today. The Napoleonic period offers the opportunity to observe the evolution of coalition warfare within the context of the evolution of war itself during a period of profound change. The anti-French coalitions provide a rich data base to examine the coalition in a variety of political and military environments. Sequential examination of these coalitions provides an iterative means of understanding how Napoleonic coalitions, and by extrapolation coalitions in general, might achieve success and avoid failure. The anti-Napoleonic coalitions attempted, in sequence, to solve the same problem--succeeding only after the sixth attempt. In this manner the period offers a broad spectrum, from flawed to successful, of coalition warfare examples.

Napoleon himself did not practice the art of coalition warfare to any great extent--and that may be among the significant reasons for his downfall. Perhaps he was permanently biased by the poor showing of the early coalitions, and therefore convinced that his type of unilateral warfare was a superior form. His opponents, however, suffered from no such bias. They were not

independently strong enough to challenge him (except defensively in Russia), and were forced to consistently return to the well of coalition warfare until they got it right.

The study of the Sixth Coalition is important because it was the attempt that finally and decisively succeeded. An improved ability to wage *coalition warfare* was the primary reason for the Sixth Coalition's success. Europe had a wealth of corporate knowledge concerning coalition warfare against Napoleon when it formed the Sixth Coalition in 1813. It incorporated these "terrible lessons" during its formation, incorporated additional lessons learned during the armistice, and continued to improve during the subsequent Fall campaign.

The Sixth Coalition also illuminates and provides understanding about modern coalition warfare doctrine. Goals, unity of effort, strategic plans, and adherence to the plan are principles derived from joint doctrine that are key to understanding Napoleonic coalition warfare. Analyzing and explaining coalitions using these principles serves two purposes, one academic and one doctrinal. Doctrinally, their use celebrates their relevance and utility with respect to modern coalitions. Accordingly, these principles must be considered in modern planning for coalition warfare. Using these principles in the academic environment broadens understanding of an important period in history.

The initial two principles come directly from modern doctrine--goals and unity of effort. These two serve as the framework from which flow two additional principles from the historical evidence--strategic plans and adherence to strategic plans. Joint doctrine implies, but does not explicitly state, these two principles. Their importance in the Napoleonic era was critical to enabling the Sixth Coalition to succeed after the armistice. Joint doctrine might do well to elevate and explicitly outline the importance of unified strategic planning and execution. Adherence in execution, in particular, is a dynamic principle that requires constant effort, liaison, and even

compromise. The result, hopefully, maintains or strengthens unity of effort and gives the unified execution of a particular strategy its power in the field.

The principle of coalition goals must be the first one resolved. It is essential for all the coalition members to agree on a common goal or set of goals. The liberation of Germany was the common goal for the Sixth Coalition. This coalition was not a group of nations loosely cooperating toward the achievement of their own individual national goals. Stated another way, a coalition of nations committed to a common goal defeated Napoleon. This goal also proved instrumental to the Sixth Coalition's victory because it provided a reference point for strategic planning. Germany's liberation served as the foundation for the principle of unity of effort.

Unity of effort is essential across the spectrum in coalition operations. Unity is difficult or impossible to establish without a reconciliation of national goals into a common goal. Universal acceptance of the common goal or goals establishes the basis for much of a coalition's unity. Therefore, resolving the issue of goals goes a long way toward creating lasting unity within a coalition.

Unity of effort cannot be maintained by common goals alone. Unity must extend further down into strategic planning and execution. As mentioned above, the liberation of Germany served as a reference point that unified strategic planning. Strategic planning toward the common goal did not take place in isolation, however. A multinational conference at Trachenberg ensured the unhindered exchange of ideas, both political and military, which enhanced the unified planning effort.

The strategic plan itself promised unity in execution. Commitment of the leaders to the strategic plan enhanced adherence to execution of the plan in the field. By not being overly specific, the Trachenberg plan automatically became more palatable to the coalition's generals because it offered plenty of opportunity for operational initiative. The multinational makeup of

the coalition's field armies also enhanced adherence by reducing parochialism and maximizing the concept of the campaign as a true coalition effort at the operational and also the strategic level of war.

Nevertheless, the maintenance of unity remains a challenge throughout any coalition's lifetime. The doctrinal differences, arguments over strategy, and command disputes of 1813 all strained the unity of the Sixth Coalition. Unity of effort can never be taken for granted by any coalition or its individual member nations.

The Second Coalition illustrates perfectly the importance of goals resolution and unity. This coalition failed because the coalition itself was flawed. The basic flaw--no common, shared goal--led to disunity at all levels. The example of the Second Coalition further highlights the importance of the coalition principles because it so resembled the Sixth. Both had highly successful beginnings, had more resources than their opponent, and were facing an opponent who was in many ways in a period of decline. More important, both experienced a rapid turn around in fortunes due to military defeat. The Second Coalition collapsed, under far less arduous conditions while the Sixth Coalition held together and prevailed. The coalition principles, a common goal and unity of effort, were key to the success of the one and the failure of the other. Additionally, the Second Coalition never improved, it declined both militarily and politically throughout its short stormy history.

The interim period between the Second and Sixth Coalitions provides a study of the synthesis from the antithesis (Second Coalition) to the thesis (Sixth Coalition) of the successful Napoleonic coalition. In addition to highlighting the need for improvements in coalition warfare, this period establishes the essential historical context in which the successful Sixth Coalition developed. This context includes two broad themes: the decline of Napoleon and his Empire and national improvements, political and military, by his opponents.

The very real decline of the French over time, dramatically accelerated by the disaster in Russia, occurred simultaneously with improvements in their opponents. Concurrently, the principal improvement relative to coalition warfare emerged in the form of the common goal of the liberation of Germany. The combination of these factors negated the previous advantages that the French and Napoleon held in organization, tactics, and elan. An essentially level playing field resulted for the opening round of the renewed coalition contest versus Napoleon in 1813.

Another development during this period was the collective experience gained by the nations of Europe in methods and strategies that might yield success against Napoleon in the field. Russia's experience in 1812 foreshadowed all the elements of the Trachenberg strategy. The Russian experience offered the lesson that combat with forces under Napoleon's direct command meant defeat. However, he could be defeated on a broad front through attrition, attacks on his communications, and attacks on his subordinates. That these lessons were mostly a result of accidents and fear did not diminish their importance. That they were not applied as the result of deliberate policy in Russia probably prevented the coalition from adopting them at the outset of the campaign of 1813.

The lessons of the level playing field during the Spring campaign in 1813 highlight several themes already discussed. The result was tactical victory for Napoleon but an overall strategic stalemate. The martial abilities of the French, and Napoleon in particular, had not degraded to a level that permitted an easy victory over them. The Russians and Prussians had fought with resolve and no little skill at both Lutzen and Bautzen. However, improvements in the coalition camp had not been enough to provide a victory in either battle. Nevertheless, the Allied improvements, especially the new unity and passion for the common goal, achieved much in the overall campaign itself.

Politically, the Sixth Coalition remained intact under very unfavorable conditions. Comparing it to the Second Coalition, its situation was similar to that of the earlier coalition after the French victories in Holland and Switzerland. True, Austria was arming in the wings, but the earlier coalition had Prussia performing the same general role. One collapsed, the other grew stronger.

Militarily, this coalition did better than previous efforts. However, this improved performance was not enough to tactically defeat Napoleon. The defeats of the Spring of 1813 illuminate those areas the coalition needed to address: a workable strategy to defeat Napoleon, consensus or agreement to stick with the strategy chosen, and the coalition realized its need to strengthen itself both politically and militarily through the addition of Austria.

As mentioned earlier, unity is easily disrupted even with a common goal. During the spring, disputes over doctrine developed into disputes over strategy. This led to a crisis between Prussia and Russia that almost resulted in their mutual estrangement. The conciliatory attitude of Austria did much to alleviate this problem and restore unity. Critical, too, was the ability of the coalition's leaders to swallow their pride and except Napoleon's offer of an armistice.

The coalition used the armistice to improve itself militarily and politically. Perhaps some common truths can be gleaned from this lesson. First, international politics is a far a more important factor in coalition warfare than in other types of conflict. This only makes sense since coalition warfare by its very nature is ruled by the relationships of the individual nations in the coalition to each other. The other truth may be that coalitions tend to have time on their side. This certainly proved the case with the Sixth Coalition. However, the will to persevere in the accomplishment of the goal must also be present.

Not surprisingly, the diplomatic and political dimension of the Sixth Coalition assumed primacy during the armistice. Austria assumed the leadership role in leading the way to the

accomplishment of the political and diplomatic objectives: the estrangement of Napoleon when he rejected the peace terms and the consolidation of the coalition itself via agreement and treaty.

The coalition, courtesy of the statesmanship of Metternich, essentially accomplished these goals. Napoleon was regarded as the aggressor and the coalition further unified themselves with the Treaty of Reichenbach. This treaty also further defined the common goal, the liberation of Germany, in terms that reconciled individual national interests. Thus, the Treaty of Reichenbach improved the political unity of the coalition.

The armistice also bought the coalition time to improve in the military dimension, not just via the addition of the Austrian army and restoration of those of Prussia and Russia, but fundamentally as a military coalition by unifying planning to produce a strategy. Unification of planning was simply accomplished by convening a multinational conference at Trachenberg in Silesia after Reichenbach had been signed. Here, after a meeting of the political leaders, the military strategy was adopted and published via a convention that bound all of its signatories to a common strategy. The Trachenberg plan, whatever the merits of the actual strategy, provided the Sixth Coalition military unity.

Unity provided a partial solution to the problems of command that emerged during the opening days of the campaign that haunted the coalition through Leipzig and beyond. In hindsight, it is no surprise that a command dispute developed. Russia became the only major power not to have command of an independent army. The Czar subsequently offered himself as overall commander of the Bohemian army, which numbered more than 200,000 troops. Metternich countered with the argument that the country with the preponderance of force should command the main army, namely that an Austrian should command the Bohemian Army. Austria won the day because her threat to withdraw would have effectively destroyed the coalition. Selection of a coalition commander based on national preponderance of force is one of the pillars

of command and control in joint doctrine.¹ The dispute over command, however, did result in the defeat at Dresden and minimized the effectiveness of the Bohemian Army. But in the long term, the Trachenberg plan was adhered to and in turn minimized the negative effects of this and other disputes.

Another aspect of unity reinforced by both the plan and its execution was the decision to ensure the armies were multinational. Within the armies, the solution to doctrinal problems was solved by maintaining national homogeneity at the corps level. Thus the armies of the Sixth Coalition were unified multinational forces composed of tactical formations which maintained internal unity by being nationally homogeneous.

Finally, the political aspects of the coalition did not end with the resumption of hostilities. Diplomacy continued to augment the earlier treaties as Britain signed further subsidy agreements with her continental partners while they accommodated each other with the series of bilateral treaties at Teplitz. The fact that these treaties were signed in the wake of a potentially coalition-busting defeat at Dresden further illuminates the level of resolve the coalition had now attained.

In summary, the ability to conduct coalition operations is an area of both grave national and international interest. It is the way most modern militaries conduct operations, both in peace and in war. In almost every conceivable scenario the United States will either operate as a member of a coalition, possibly against an opposing coalition.

Napoleonic coalition warfare provides a means to understand, for a particular period, some fundamental principles of coalitions. Analysis of the success and failure of the anti-Napoleonic coalitions provides a way to illuminate these principles against the harsh backdrop of actual historic experience. It is a less expensive means than the trial and error method used by Europe from 1792 to 1815.

Analysis of these coalitions using the four principles gleaned from joint doctrine defined the relative importance of the principle with respect to the strength or weakness of the particular coalition being examined. This process also established a principle's relationship to the other principles and non doctrinal factors. For anti-Napoleonic coalitions, national goals versus coalition goals, their divergence and reconciliation, emerged as the fundamental principle to resolve before a coalition can hope to proceed with any success. Development of a common goal or set of goals is the essential first step toward unity of effort. Common coalition goals are the point of departure, the bedrock, for unity within coalitions.

However, the lessons of the anti-Napoleonic coalitions emphasize that more than a common goal is needed to attain the kind of unity of effort to overcome an opponent of the caliber of Napoleon. Other factors can further improve unity of effort and, therefore, improve the chances for the success of a coalition. In the realm of unity separate from that of goals, these factors include unity of command and accounting for differences in doctrine if unified doctrine is impractical.

Unity of effort contributed to success in the application of the principles of strategic planning and adherence to plans. The desire for unity by the coalition states in 1813 led to unity in planning and execution. Unity in planning and execution in turn enhanced or repaired unity of effort as the campaign unfolded. Unified planning toward a common goal will often lead to resolution of details in the planning environment and not on the field of battle. Unified planning can also improve the element of unity in the execution of strategic plans because participants are more likely to adhere to a strategy that they helped construct.

As stated earlier, joint doctrine may be deficient in the importance it attaches to unified strategic planning and unified adherence in execution in the area of coalition operations. The lessons of the coalitions against Napoleon and the French argue that success is jeopardized when

multinational efforts are not harnessed to a common purpose. The common goal defines a coalition's purpose. The means to the common goal must be understood by all. This understanding produces unity of effort. Unity of effort improves by bringing everyone into the planning process. Unity of effort suffers when individual nations proceed to execute a strategic plan without reference to each other. Adhering and executing as a team maintains unity of effort.

In closing, the Sixth Coalition was successful in large part because the mechanism of coalition warfare was intelligently and resolutely executed. It succeeded in achieving unity and harmony. The leaders of the coalition produced a uniquely coalition-oriented strategy that addressed the common goal while considering the threat posed by forces personally led by Napoleon. The leaders and generals of the Sixth Coalition accepted and executed the Trachenberg strategy predominantly because it was in their individual national best interest. The Sixth Coalition succeeded by persevering and prevailing in a contest against genius--it was no small achievement.

¹Joint Pub 3-0, VI-7.

APPENDIX
TRACHENBERG CONVENTION

Convention signed at Trachenberg, 12th of July, 1813, as a basis for the Operations of the Campaign.¹

The following general principles have been decided: the Allied forces will always mass on the side of the larger enemy forces. As a consequence:

1. The corps which have to conduct operation on the enemy flanks or rear will always cut as direct as possible the enemy line of operations.
2. The larger Allied force must select a position which enables it to face the enemy wherever he advances. The salient of Bohemia seems to be proper to enable it. According to this principle, the combined armies will have to occupy the following positions before the end of armistice:

A part of the Allied army in Silesia (98,000 to 100,000 troops) will join as soon as possible, by the routes between Landshut and Gratz, the Austrian Army in order to form with it a 200,000 to 220,000 strength force in Bohemia.

The Army of the Crown Prince of Sweden, while leaving a 15,000 to 20,000 strength Corps screening the Danish and French from Lubeck and Hamburg, will mass approximately 70,000 troops near Trauenbrutzen. As soon as the armistice comes to an end, this Army will cross the Elbe River between Torgau and Magdebourg, then moves towards Leipzig.

The rest of the Allied Army in Silesia, with 50,000 soldiers, will follow the enemy towards the Elbe River. This army will avoid committing itself except in the case of an extremely favorable situation. Once on the Elbe River, this force will try to cross the river between Torgau and Dresden in order to join the Crown Prince of Sweden's Army. The strength will be therefore 120,000 troops. If however, there is a need to reinforce the Allied Army in Bohemia, this Army, instead of joining the Swedish Army, will quickly move to Bohemia.

The Austrian part of the Allied force will advance either by Eger or by Hoff, or in Saxony, Silesia, or along Danube.

If the Emperor NAPOLEON decides to march to fight the Bohemian Army, the Crown Prince of Sweden's Army will try as quick as possible to reach the enemy's rear. If, on the contrary, Napoleon moves toward the Swedish Army, the Allied Army will conduct a vigorous offensive operation through the enemy communications to join battle. All the armies will make the enemy camp the point of rendezvous.

offensive operation through the enemy communications to join battle. All the armies will make the enemy camp the point of rendezvous.

The Russian Army (Reserve) led by General Bennigsen will move from the Vistula River to the Oder River by Kalish in the direction of Glogau in order to be capable of moving towards the enemy if he stays in SILESIA, or denying him the ability to invade Poland.

¹Translation of the Trachenberg Convention from the original French courtesy Major Jean Parlanti, Army of the Republic of France. Stewart, Charles William Vane, Marquess of Londonderry, *Narrative of the War in Germany and France in 1813 and 1814*, (London: Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1830), 372-373.

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